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NATIONAL REVIEW

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The Democrats and Al Sharpton, Hatemonger

BY JAY NORDLINGER

McCAIN MADNESS

Michael Barone
Ramesh Ponnuru
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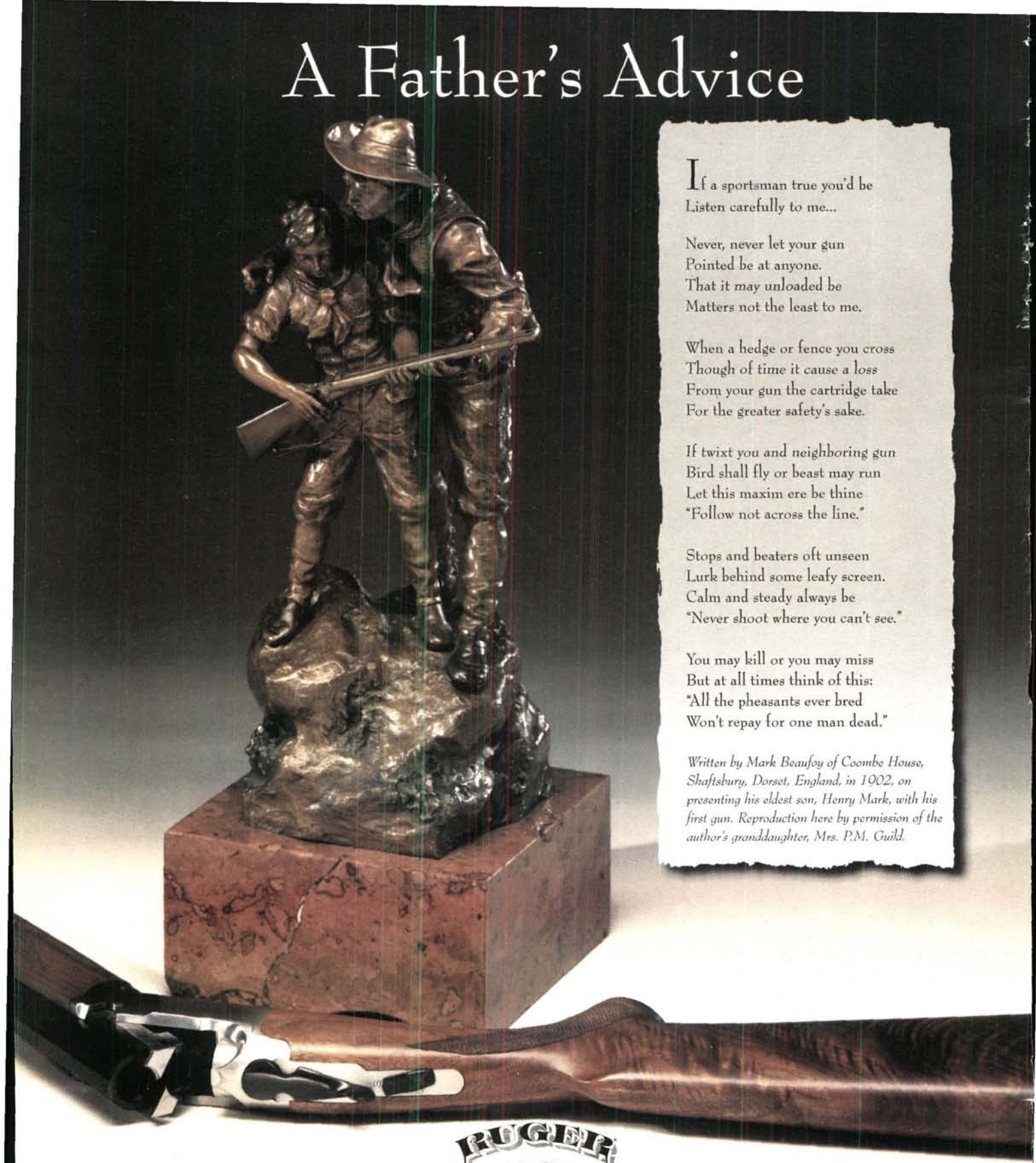
A Father's Advice



If a sportsman true you'd be
Listen carefully to me...

Never, never let your gun
Pointed be at anyone.
That it may unloaded be
Matters not the least to me.

When a hedge or fence you cross
Though of time it cause a loss
From your gun the cartridge take
For the greater safety's sake.

If twixt you and neighboring gun
Bird shall fly or beast may run
Let this maxim ere be thine
"Follow not across the line."

Stops and beaters oft unseen
Lurk behind some leafy screen.
Calm and steady always be
"Never shoot where you can't see."

You may kill or you may miss
But at all times think of this:
"All the pheasants ever bred
Won't repay for one man dead."

Written by Mark Beaufoy of Coombe House, Shaftsbury, Dorset, England, in 1902, on presenting his eldest son, Henry Mark, with his first gun. Reproduction here by permission of the author's granddaughter, Mrs. P.M. Guild.

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■ LETTERS ■

BLOODY FRIDAY

NATIONAL REVIEW can't get it right on Ireland ("The Week," Feb. 21). Just a few points to ponder:

1. There never was any agreement by anyone for IRA decommissioning to begin by February 1. This was a unilateral condition *imposed* by David Trimble after the completion of the review conducted by George Mitchell last November—sort of similar to what the Soviets used to do.

2. There are at least 150,000 "legal" guns held by Unionists in Northern Ireland, with no effort being made to decommission them.

3. The Royal Ulster Constabulary, the "front-line defense force" you referred to, is in fact a bigoted, sectarian force guilty of massive human-rights abuses. It is being drastically reformed (would that it did face "dismantling") based on the findings of an international commission chaired by a retired Conservative MP.

4. Sinn Fein has not violated one provision of the Good Friday Agreement or the Mitchell Review.

5. Since the Good Friday Agreement has not been violated by Sinn Fein, the British government violated international law by usurping the power of the lawfully elected government in Northern Ireland and reimposing direct colonial rule.

In other words, you got it all wrong.

Rep. Peter T. King
Washington, D.C.

THE EDITORS RESPOND: *Rep. King's letter is the standard propaganda put out by Sinn Fein/IRA, and very disheartening, too, from someone elected democratically to office.*

1. During the Mitchell Review and afterward, David Trimble made it clear that he was ready to take the risk of forming inclusive institutions on the condition that republicans fulfill their obligation to decommission. Sinn Fein/IRA's absolute failure to do so is the cause of today's impasse. At the time, President Clinton specifically stated that in the event of Sinn Fein/IRA failure to disarm, he would fully understand if the Unionists walked away.

2. Legitimate government authority has licensed these guns, without any sectarian dimension. The laws governing guns in Ulster are far more restrictive than those in the United States.

3. The RUC is such a professional force that it has won plaudits from the Irish Garda (Ireland's police), the FBI, and lately NATO, for the deployment of RUC police in Kosovo. In opinion polls, the overwhelming majority of the Ulster population declare themselves either "satisfied" with the RUC or "very satisfied." No wonder Mr. King and his friends want to be rid of it.

4. Note the weaselly way that Sinn Fein is here separated from the IRA. In violation of Mitchell principles, republican terrorists have been responsible for punishment killings and beatings. Sinn Fein also unilaterally appointed the condemned killer of a policeman to be a special adviser.

5. This misrepresents Britain's legal and constitutional right. The British government retains sovereignty over its own territory. Not scrapped, the Good Friday Agreement was suspended, pending a hoped-for revival. It was signed in a spirit of compromise, which Sinn Fein/IRA refuses to reciprocate.

LAST RITES

A brief note to Andrew Stuttaford ("Andy, Get Your Gun," Feb. 21): You might tell your wife and kids to prepare for the worst. On August 28, 1978, my pistol-licensed father passed away in New York City. On August 29, as I was making the funeral arrangements, I received a telephone call from someone who identified himself as a member of the New York Police Department. He informed me that if I did not turn in the licensed pistol within 24 hours, I could be arrested and the weapon would be confiscated. I wish you and your family better treatment. Based on your experience, however, it seems an unlikely prospect.

Jed Babbin
Arlington, Va.

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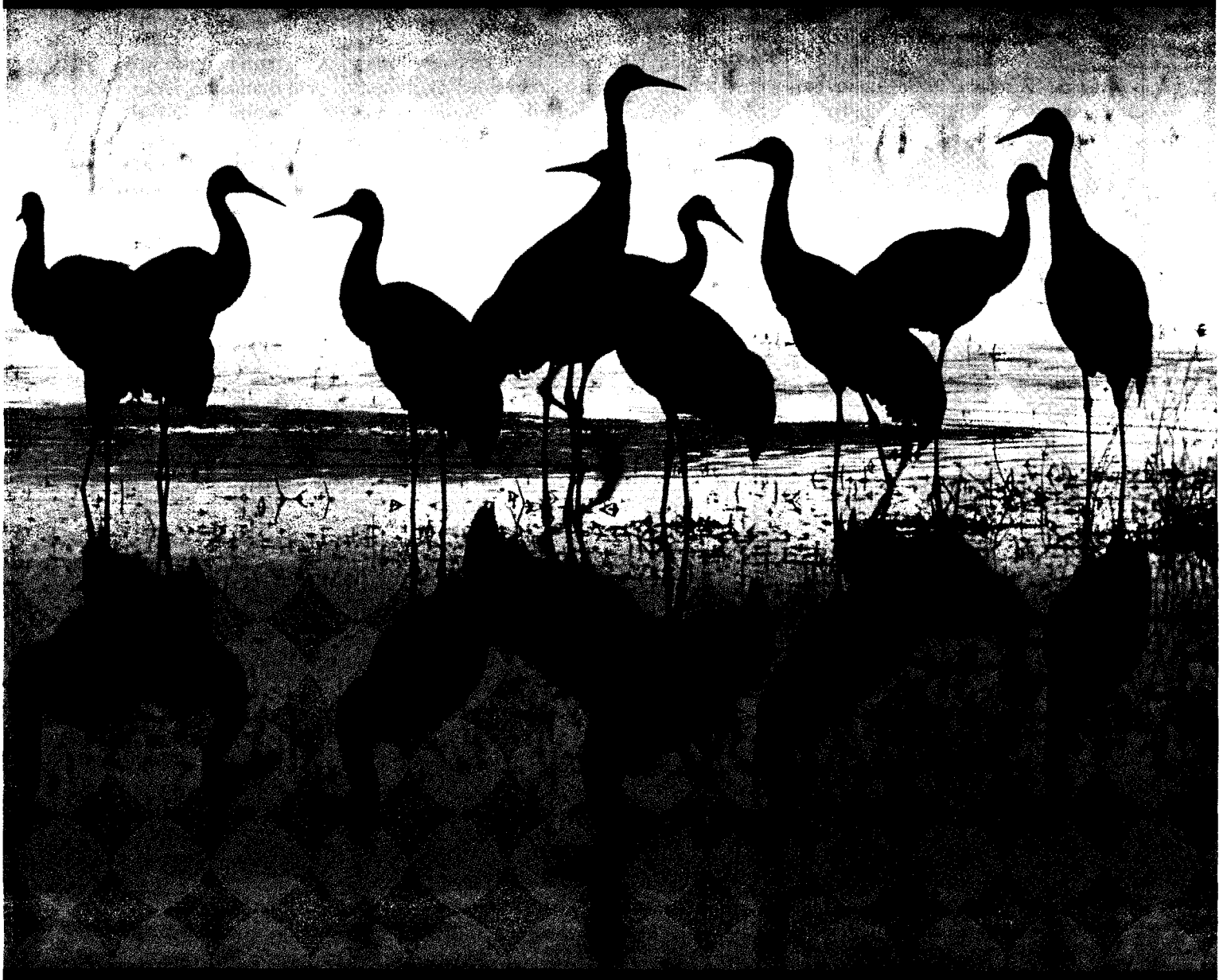

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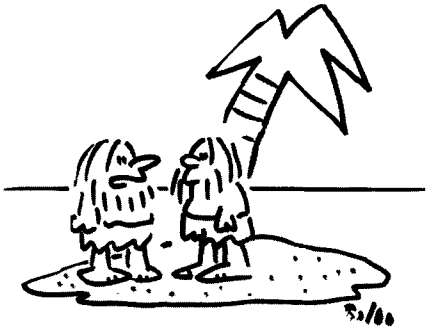
■ FOR THE RECORD ■

■ In C-SPAN poll of historians, President **Clinton** finishes dead last on "moral authority" scale—one place below **Richard Nixon**—and ranks 21st on overall performance. **Ronald Reagan** finishes 11th overall and **George Bush** 20th. . . . In recent Fabrizio McLaughlin poll, 57 percent say Clinton should be disbarred because of his "false, misleading and evasive answers . . . designed to obstruct the judicial process." . . . Trustees for Clintons' defense fund say they probably can't cover First Couple's legal debts, which total $4.3 million. . . . New York *Daily News* asks **Hillary Clinton** whether it was mistake to blame "vast right-wing conspiracy" for her husband's troubles; replies First Lady: "I thought that was sort of behind us—until I read [the mayor's campaign] mailings—I think he has their mailing list." . . . Democratic appointees now outnumber Republican ones on federal bench, 389 to 386, and lead is proportionally larger on circuit courts of appeal, 99 to 81, says Alliance for Justice.

■ Vice President **Gore**, at Harlem debate, on how he can oppose education vouchers for poor parents but send own children to ritzy private schools: "You know, you can leave them out of this if you want to." . . . Gore, following GOP's South Carolina primary: "There are those who have 20/20 vision who are morally blind . . . some of those individuals just left the state of South Carolina." . . . Gore wins endorsement from New York's biggest gay-rights group, promises to charge a commission with studying how gay partners "should be recognized." . . . Gore, in 1983 letter to constituent: "Let me assure you that I share your belief that innocent human life must be protected and I have an open mind on how to further this goal. " . . . Gore, in February 25 *New York Times*, on how long he has supported the *Roe* v. *Wade* ruling: "always, always, always." . . . After Mt. Rainier hiking trip with son last summer, Gore aides said veep wouldn't discuss details because it was "private experience." New Gore ad on hike, narrated by climber **Jim Frush**: "A lot of people turned back, but Al, he didn't want to quit. He wanted to try to get to the top, and we made it safely." . . . **Bill Bradley** campaign chairman **Douglas Berman**, to three reporters in hotel bar, according to *New York Times*: "So you're the only ones left?" . . . Bradley phones reporters on Gore beat, criticizes Gore for keeping press at arm's length. Voicemail left by Bradley for **Ceci Connolly** of *Washington Post*: "I was just calling to tell you I wish you were traveling with us. We'd have a good time. And you know, I'd be around. I'd answer your questions."

■ **Gary Bauer** endorses **John McCain**, says, "I am absolutely convinced, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Senator McCain is committed to a pro-life running mate." . . . Former abortionist and



"Maybe it would ease our plight, but how would we go about deficit spending?"

NARAL leader **Bernard Nathanson**, now a pro-lifer, supports McCain on the condition that Bauer work with him "to try to change [McCain's] mind" on fetal-tissue research and rape, incest, and life-of-the-mother exceptions to abortion ban. . . . **William Bennett**, in *Los Angeles Times*: "It is pretty clear that John McCain is a better bet for winning the presidency for the Republicans than **George Bush**." . . . Pollster **John Zogby** predicts GOP nomination won't be decided until convention in Philadelphia. . . . **Nancy Reagan** says she won't endorse in primaries, ending speculation she would come out for McCain. . . . Reagan biographer **Edmund Morris**, on media's negative reception to *Dutch*, in *U.S. News & World Report*: "I guess it makes them uncomfortably aware of their own fictionalizing. . . . The well-known Washington novelist **Bob Woodward** has been very critical of my book."

■ AFL-CIO promises to spend $40 million on political campaigns this year, up $5 million from 1996. . . . Sen. **Rod Grams** (R., Minn.), seeking reelection, says second term in office would be his last. . . . **Pat Buchanan**, seeking Reform nomination, worries Ross Perot may try to steer party toward McCain. . . . **Ralph Nader**, who won 2 percent of California's vote in 1996, says he will run again for president on Green Party ticket, but first must win primary against **Jello Biafra**, lead singer of punk band The Dead Kennedys. . . . GOP pollster **Frank Luntz** writes weekly political column for www.yrock.com, website of the Young Republican Federation.

■ Education secretary **Richard Riley** says teachers should work eleven months instead of nine. . . . Inspired by C-SPAN school bus, **Balint Vazsonyi**, Hungarian émigré, pianist, and conservative commentator, kicks off 50-state "Reelect America" bus tour, carrying first principles on board. . . . American Civil Liberties Union demands University of Colorado basketball coach cease voluntary prayer sessions following practices. . . . NAACP sues to stop Florida governor **Jeb Bush**'s One Florida program, may boycott state. . . . Hasbro plans to market **JFK** action figure in PT-109 fatigues as part of GI Joe collection.

■ Israel offers to produce secret memoirs of Nazi official **Adolf Eichmann** for use in British libel suit. . . . European Patent Office says it mistakenly approved human-cloning patent. . . . Number of reported crimes more than doubles in 1999, reports Russian Interior Ministry. . . . South Korean government denies report in local newspaper that a North Korean missile expert defected to United States in February. . . . Greek archaeologists say they may have found bones of soldiers eulogized by **Pericles**.

■ Gore agrees to meet with protesters in Oakland, says, "Let's hear it for the First Amendment," reports *Washington Post*. But he blocks press from covering conversation. **NR**

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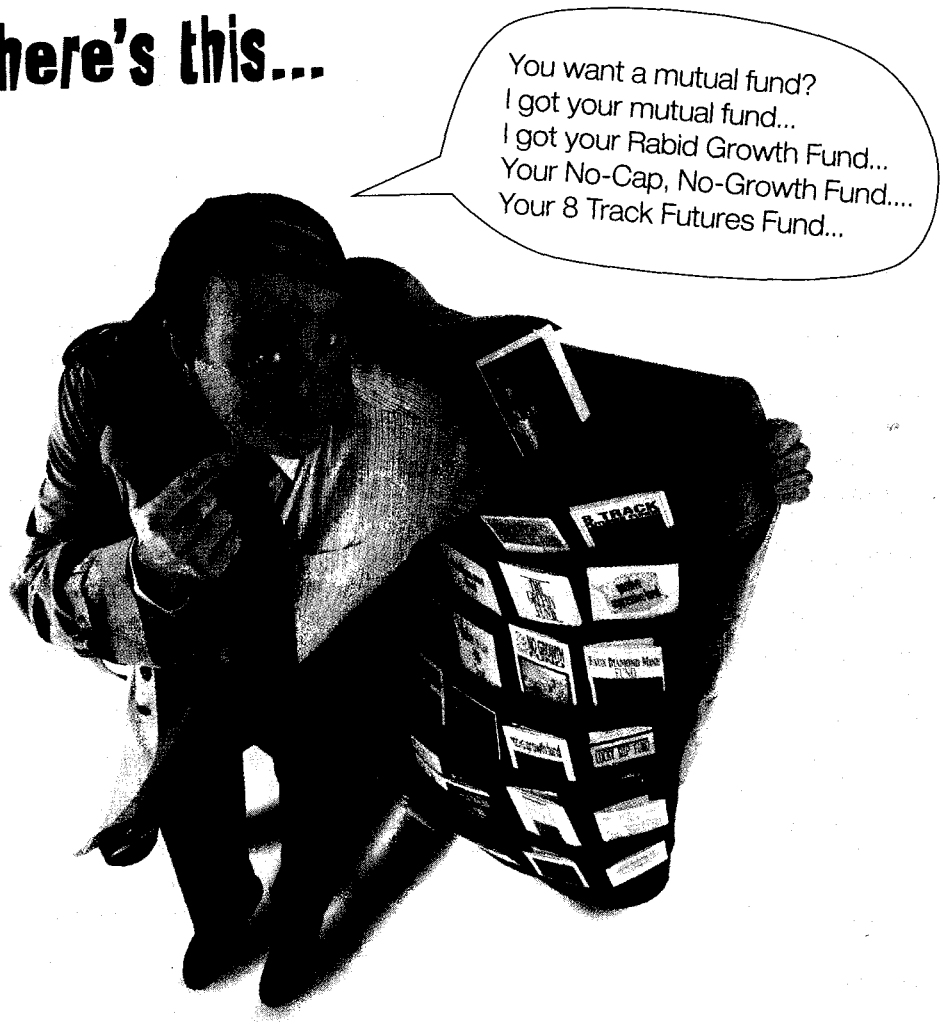
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THE WEEK

■ So Salman Rushdie is moving to New York. What, does *he* want to run for Senate too?

■ The media often make too much of the alleged unpopularity of negative campaigning. But John McCain just may be their case in point. In the days prior to the Virginia and Washington primaries, his campaign continued to place telephone calls not so subtly alleging that George W. Bush is anti-Catholic. So too, McCain harshly attacked Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell in Virginia Beach. In another Virginia whistle stop, McCain vowed to tear down the "machine" of Gov. Jim Gilmore and Sen. John Warner, a Draconian political operation that Virginians had no idea existed until McCain showed up to bid it adieu. All this, from the candidate solemnly pledged to run a positive campaign. While the press gloried in McCain's act, Republican primary voters couldn't be faulted for concluding that it was all soundbites and fury, signifying nothing. In Virginia, as in South Carolina and Michigan, McCain again failed to break the 30 percent threshold among Republican voters. He fared slightly better in Washington state, but still lost to Bush among Republicans by a 20-point margin. McCain is a compelling campaigner, but it is becoming clear that, for GOP voters, there is no substitute for real positions that they find philosophically congenial. In an otherwise classic and shrewd campaign, that is the one thing the McCain operation may have overlooked.

■ McCain branches, from attacking evangelists, to being one himself: "To stand up and take on the forces of evil, that's my job."

■ McCain has also become a historian. "Theodore Roosevelt fought the forces of evil in the Republican party." Theodore Roosevelt, in 1912, fought William Howard Taft. That sober 300-pounder, who loved dancing and golf, and served as chief justice of the Supreme Court, was the force of evil? Evil—in the *20th century*? Grown-ups don't talk like that, Senator.

■ For the most part, McCain's presidential campaign has not been nearly as conservative as his Senate record. Bilingual education may be a case where he happily reverses that pattern. While McCain, like George W. Bush, has heretofore supported bilingual programs, he has recently said, "There's a whole lot of bilingual education programs that don't work, and they should be eliminated." Total immersion in English, he says, is the best way to teach English to immigrant children. He's right, and he'd be even more right if he recognized that *none* of the bilingual programs work well. Ron Unz, who got bilingual ed banned in California, supports McCain and hopes he leads the charge against the programs. If he does, he will remind conservatives what they like about him—and prove that his campaign's patriotism is more than a personal sentiment.

■ After weeks of criticism for speaking at Bob Jones University, George W. Bush wrote a note to John Cardinal O'Connor expressing his regret for not having repudiated the school's anti-Catholicism. The controversy was trumped up in that none of Bush's accusers ever really believed that Bush harbors a trace of anti-Catholicism. But combined with the equally trumped-up controversy over the appointment of a new House chaplain—Democrats are pretending to believe that Republicans passed over a priest because of bigotry—the Bob Jones affair is creating a serious problem for Republicans in the fall. Churchgoing Catholics are a swing vote, and they are disproportionately concentrated in swing states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New Jersey. These voters helped Clinton in 1992, the Republicans in 1994, and then Clinton again. Catholics historically distrusted the GOP as the party of the WASP elite, and that distrust lingers because of distrust of southern fundamentalists. By adding to that distrust, Democrats (with the assistance of John McCain's cynical use of the Bob Jones "issue") hope to hold on to Hispanic voters and northeasterners. Republicans might respond by pointing out that the Democrats' pro-abortion litmus test for the federal judiciary amounts to a religious test excluding Catholics who follow Church teaching. But the stakes are sufficiently high that the GOP will also need to make a special effort to appeal to Catholic sensibilities—quite possibly including the nomination of a pro-life Catholic for the vice presidency.

■ McCain, the press points out, appeals to Democrats. Well, that's nice. But what's wrong with appealing to Republicans? They are not, after all, some tiny party or weirdo sect. They control two houses of Congress, a majority of the nation's governorships, a majority of the state legislatures. The Democrats not only feel no obligation to appeal to Republicans—they feel none to appeal to anyone in center field. Al Gore and Bill Bradley have engaged in a bitter dispute over how many years each one has favored abortion in all cases, including last-minute infanticides (a.k.a. partial-birth abortions). At the Apollo Theatre in New York City, they squabbled over reparations for slavery and discrimination (Bradley wants them across the board, Gore wants them in specific cases) and kissed the pinkie of the Rev. Al Sharpton, slanderer and verbal arson-

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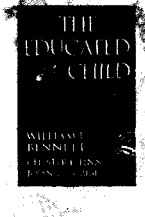

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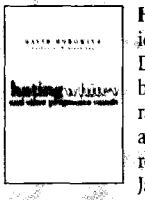

Hating Whitey - With his trademark iconoclastic style, reformed radical David Horowitz dissects the social double standard that dismisses black racism. The so-called civil rights leaders are outraged by, among other things, his reference to Kweisi Mfume and Jesse Jackson as "racial ambulance chasers."
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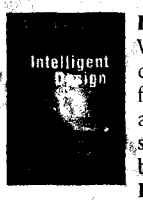

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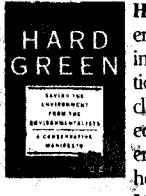

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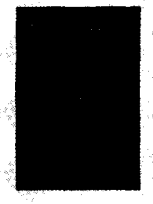

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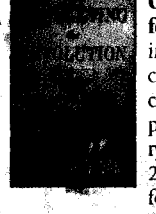

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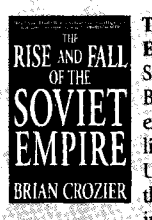

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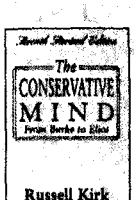

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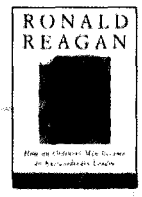

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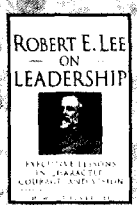

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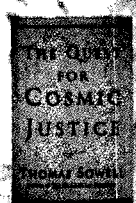

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ist. This is the right platform for running for president of a Greenwich Village Democratic Club, not for President of the United States.

■ Vice President Gore, asked a question about medical marijuana by *Rolling Stone*, answered in a fashion that was . . . Gore-like. He said he supported "vigorous and well-funded research" into pot's possible medical use, but until then, he is against allowing it. But in fact there is a decades-long accumulation of research and testimony, here and abroad, showing that marijuana helps patients undergoing chemotherapy, or who have AIDS wasting syndrome, multiple sclerosis, or other ailments. In other words, Gore will be for medical marijuana come the Greek kalends or the sweet by-and-by.

■ Once again, Bill Clinton is stealing a good idea from the Republicans. This time, the idea is to break the OPEC cartel. Energy secretary Bill Richardson has been dispatched to various oil-producing capitals to send the message that America frowns on price-rigging efforts that threaten global economic recovery. (Every recession in the last three decades has been associated with rising oil prices.) It took voter discontent over $2 gas prices and a shortage of home heating fuel to persuade the administration to pick up the idea, first proposed by Steve Forbes in an early GOP primary debate and then echoed by George W. Bush. If oil prices are brought down from $30 a barrel—roughly twice the price that would probably prevail in a free market—Forbes's candidacy will already have achieved more for the public good than any of the campaigns still alive.

■ In striking down a bizarre Hawaiian law that permits only citizens of native ancestry to vote in elections for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the Supreme Court delivered another blow to racial and ethnic classifications in government. The vote was 7 to 2, but only four other justices signed on to Anthony Kennedy's ringing opinion—revealing, again, the Court's frail consensus on some of the most important issues it faces. The Clinton administration actually defended the OHA and its racially exclusive composition, and a Gore administration would presumably do the same. All the more reason to make sure there never is one.

■ An Albany jury acquitted the four cops who killed West African immigrant Amadou Diallo in the South Bronx of all charges. The officers had been looking for a black rapist; Diallo did not answer their questions and pulled a black object from his pocket (a wallet, though it looked, in a nighttime glimpse, like a pistol); and so they fired. A large portion of New York seethed at the verdict, because blacks and the Left hate Mayor Rudolph Giuliani—the latter because he beat them; the former because he beat the first black mayor, David Dinkins, and because he is unskilled in rituals of deference. Racial operators, like the Rev. Al Sharpton and the Clinton administration, have battened off the crisis: The Clintonites are considering, absurdly, whether to indict the cops on federal charges. Not absurd is the need to review police procedures. New York brought crime down with intelligent, not merely tough, policing (New York cops fire their guns less often than cops in other cities). New York should keep refining its methods, not only to prevent tragedies, but to save even more lives and property.

■ The Census Bureau continues to insist that it can flawlessly perform the complicated task of statistically sampling the U.S. population, as opposed to counting folks the old-fashioned way. But it just mailed out 120 million letters to incorrect addresses. That's known as a statistically significant error.

■ A recent study concludes that as many as 1.5 percent of children between two and four years old (150,000 tots) were getting stimulants, antidepressants, or antipsychotic drugs in 1995—up from 1 percent, or 100,000, in 1991. Earlier studies showed increases in the drugging of kids from ages 5 to 19. It's a good thing we are fighting the good fight against illegal drugs, cigarettes, and the Budweiser lizards.

■ Voting in the Muslim Middle East has the purpose of confirming the current ruler in office. Which makes the recent election in Teheran all the more remarkable. Pitting Islamic fundamentalists versus reformers, the process seems to have been free from irregularities, a feat in itself. Supreme authority in the state, it is true, still lies with the "Righteous Guardian," who is the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a man as narrow and fanatical as they come. President Mohammad Khatami, leader of the reformists, is strictly speaking his subordinate. But in the elections, he and the reformists crushed the hardline Islamic fundamentalists by something that will be on the order of four or five to one by the time final results are in. It is possible that the power struggle between the Righteous Guardian and the president will culminate on the streets, even in civil war—possible but not likely. Iranians are evidently perceiving for themselves that they have been through 20 years of unnecessary social experiment, the opposite of progress. The flame of Islamic fundamentalism appears to be slowly burning down toward extinction in the place where it was lit.

■ The northern Kosovo town of Mitrovica gets the headlines: It was there that a Serb mob pelted American soldiers with stones; it was there that eleven people, most of them Albanian, were killed in January. But throughout the rest of Kosovo, it is Serbs and gypsies who are being terrorized: They must live in walled ghettos, and when anyone is killed, Albanian prosecutors drop the case. Drug smugglers and KLA guerrillas cross the border into southern Serbia, which beefs up its military presence. NATO troops find themselves doing police work—not all that well, considering their thin numbers and divided command (Gen. Klaus Reinhardt, the German commander of the NATO peacekeeping force, had his pistol pinched from his holster during one demonstration). If Europe and the U.N. want to try to keep peace in the Balkans, let them. Kosovo is not a good candidate to be added to the halls of Montezuma and the shores of Tripoli.

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■ Lionel Jospin, the French prime minister, is rather a blunt man, devoid of the proverbial Gallic charm. In Jerusalem on his recent visit to Israel and the Palestine Authority, he described Hezbollah attacks on Israel as "terrorist acts." No words could be more appropriate. But then he stopped off at Bir Zeit on the West Bank—which is more an authorized demonstration area than a university campus. Some 2,000 protesters refuted the phrase "terrorist acts" by pelting Jospin with stones, jostling him and slightly cutting his head. Standard behavior, you might think. But President Jacques Chirac of France immediately threw his own large lump of concrete at Jospin. He reaffirmed "the constancy of French foreign policy and the balanced approach of our country in the Middle East." So weasel words about terror are the equivalent of a balanced approach. That is charmless in its own way.

■ History is to civilization what memory is to an individual: a source of identity and meaning. A survey of 55 selective colleges and universities conducted by the Roper organization for the American Council of Trustees and Alumni demonstrates that even a rudimentary knowledge of American history is absent in 81 percent of graduating seniors. These flunkers could not identify such obscure things as Valley Forge or sentences from the Gettysburg Address. A civilizational lobotomy has taken place. Good news: Most of those tested could identify Beavis and Butthead.

■ Harvard University has announced that it will soon have a Ph.D. program in African-American studies, né black studies. We have seen over a period of some three decades the spread of such "studies" programs: black studies, women's studies, Caribbean studies, gay studies, Native American studies, and so on. In the beginning, these programs were advertised as exploratory and transitional. They would address, so it was claimed, areas long neglected by the regular departments. What they turned up would then be added to the offerings of the regular departments, such as History, English, etc. Then the "studies" programs would have completed their missions and would disappear. But the "studies" programs did not go away, and it soon became clear that the pursuit of truth was not their main objective. "Studies" programs became enclaves of propaganda and victimology. They are almost always undersubscribed. Harvard's undergraduate black-studies program enlists about 50 students out of an undergraduate population of about 6,000. So now we are to have a Ph.D. program in African-American studies. Those completing their Ph.D. offering will find that they gaze upon glittering opportunities: a) teach black studies somewhere, or b) with $2 in hand, buy a cup of (Starbucks) coffee.

■ The followers of Ayn Rand have a summer camp for children that, they say, "teaches them how to think for themselves." So there'll be a crowd of little nippers running around like Nietzschean supermen, with no externally based morality or regard for the feelings of others. How exactly does this differ from the typical schoolyard?

CAMPAIGN 2000

McCain and His Friends

JOHN MCCAIN, like George W. Bush, is a moderately conservative Republican. A reasonable case can be made that McCain would be the stronger candidate in the fall, and that this consideration outweighs his recent irregularities. Some McCain supporters, however, are making rather more grandiose claims for him than merely his prospective strength against Gore.

William Kristol and David Brooks of *The Weekly Standard* argue that McCain is an avatar of a new kind of politics that will revitalize or even replace a moribund Republican establishment and a decrepit conservative movement. Euthanizing the existing party and movement, they seem to be saying, would be a good thing.

Now, one might think that McCain would shrink from the politics of parricide, and he is careful to provide himself rhetorical cover by his regular obeisances to the blood of Reagan, which runs rich in his own veins. Yet he travels in the direction of the freshly baptized leader. The day after he denounced Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, one of his lieutenants told the story in so many words to the *New York Times*. McCain's campaign is creating a new party, he confirmed—a party that will give less precedence to conservative ideals, more to those put forth by Ross Perot's secularist supporters.

It's easy to see the appeal of this transformation to such as the editors of *The New Republic*. They have endorsed McCain because, "if his crusade succeeds, America will have two parties advocating some reasonable approximation of the public good rather than one." Exit the private good. McCain's appeal, for them, is his rejection of substantial tax cuts. That departure from Republican orthodoxy alone slides leftward the political playing field. One doubts that this is the objective Messrs. Kristol and Brooks have in mind.

Yet it is difficult to know what they do have in mind. Kristol and Brooks do acknowledge, parenthetically, that McCain's rhetoric is sometimes "hyperbolic and demagogic." They concede that his campaign's "themes and principles" are not yet "fully developed into a governing agenda." But the imperative is to get rid of a conservative movement that, writes Kristol, "in many ways has become an obstacle to achieving conservative goals."

In what ways? What goals would McCain make achievable? McCain's "themes and principles" turn out to be patriotism and reform. Under such flags, any agenda is imaginable. In their vagueness, these "themes" bring to mind the earlier call attempted by Kristol and Brooks, to construct something dubbed "national-greatness conservatism." That's different from the grand old flag in being less moralistic, less apprehensive about the growth of the public sector; and then there are traces of green in the

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dream, right down to the public parks.

Kristol and Brooks tell us that in breaking away from the Republican establishment McCain is merely following in the footsteps of Ronald Reagan and Newt Gingrich. But defying the establishment isn't an ontological good. Opposing Tom DeLay, with the motive of passing McCain's campaign-finance reforms, is not the same as opposing Bob Michel's tax hikes, or opposing Gerald Ford's sometime appeasement of the Soviet Union. It is not a serious argument, though it can be made to sound persuasive, to call for destroying an institution on the assumption that a better institution will arise from the ashes. An anarchic passion to smash is not a conservative impulse.

Since most conservatives have declined to take this leap in the dark, Kristol and Brooks are now criticizing them as shortsighted and even stupid. Here's Brooks, in *Newsweek*, on conservatives who support Bush: "They look out over that GOP coalition—the gun lovers, the religious conservatives, the free marketeers—and they think that adds up to 51 percent of the electorate. . . . These people detest McCain because liberals don't hate him." McCain supporters, by contrast, know that "it's just a fact that the old GOP coalition no longer commands a majority."

But these are straw men. Defined as Brooks defines it, the GOP coalition *never* added up to 51 percent of the electorate, even under Reagan. Nobody denies that in order to win an election a Republican presidential candidate has to appeal to millions of people who do not consider themselves conservatives, let alone part of a movement. Nor do conservatives want liberals to hate their champions. The concern about McCain is that he seems afraid to risk irritating liberals, who have generated so much of the support for his candidacy.

The *New York Post* makes a different argument for McCain: that he would restore the nation's sense of honor. But McCain has vitiated that credential, by encouraging the preposterous insinuation that because Bush spoke at Bob Jones University he is furtively anti-Catholic. McCain has compounded the offense, first by denying that he had anything to do with the famous calls and then denying that that was the image the callers were attempting to convey.

McCain's denunciation of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, meanwhile, was both deceitful and opportunistic. Opportunistic because McCain was obviously trying to curry favor with liberals by trashing two religious conservatives long past their peaks of influence. Deceitful because he affected to be concerned only with Robertson and Falwell. They are guilty of "political tactics of division and slander" that "shame our faith, our party, and our country." But what have they done that sharply distinguishes them from Gary Bauer, who stood with McCain during his speech? The only distinction McCain drew was that Robertson and Falwell oppose him and his campaign-finance plan, while Bauer supports both. The difference hardly justifies McCain's likening of Falwell and Robertson to Louis Farrakhan and Al Sharpton.

JOHN MCHYDE

I never saw him quaff a glass
As Dr. Jekyll did,
But up in Michigan, a nerve,
Or possibly his id
(Hello to all you Freudians)
Became so out of whack,
When death stars started orbiting,
I knew some day he'll crack.

—W. H. VON DREELE

Indeed, Bauer has a special responsibility to speak up about the attempts by McCain and his aides to delegitimize Bush's South Carolina victory. In this effort to put a white hood over conservatism, some McCain supporters are complicit. "Just as [Willie] Horton came to symbolize the excesses of liberalism," Brooks writes in *Newsweek*, "Bob Jones, or at least the university that bears his name, has come to symbolize a conservative movement that has lost touch with mainstream opinion." Never mind that most conservatives had never heard of Bob Jones, or his school's doctrines, before this year. Whom have they infected?

McCain's conservative supporters should be concerned that he appears to be building a case that if Bush wins the nomination, as is likely, it will somehow be illegitimate. By bashing conservatives, stimulating hostility between Catholics and evangelicals, painting Bush as a dirty-trickster, McCain is doing Al Gore's work for him. So, however unwittingly, are some of his advocates.

CHINA

Obsession in Beijing

READING the Chinese government's 11,000-word white paper on Taiwan brings to mind G. K. Chesterton's remark that madness consists not so much in a deficiency of reason as in an excess of it. Here, in all its terrifying minuteness, is the logic of the lunatic. At one point, the white paper argues—at some length—that to take into consideration the wishes of the actual people of Taiwan would be "undemocratic." One recalls that 30 years ago, this same Chinese Communist party was solemnly instructing its people that extreme leftism was a rightist deviation. Here, naked and shameless, is the demented arrogance of rulers who for 70 years have conducted their affairs by murdering anyone who disagreed with them. Here are 11,000 reasons that current U.S. policy on China—made up of equal parts incoherence and wishful thinking—is wildly, dangerously misguided.

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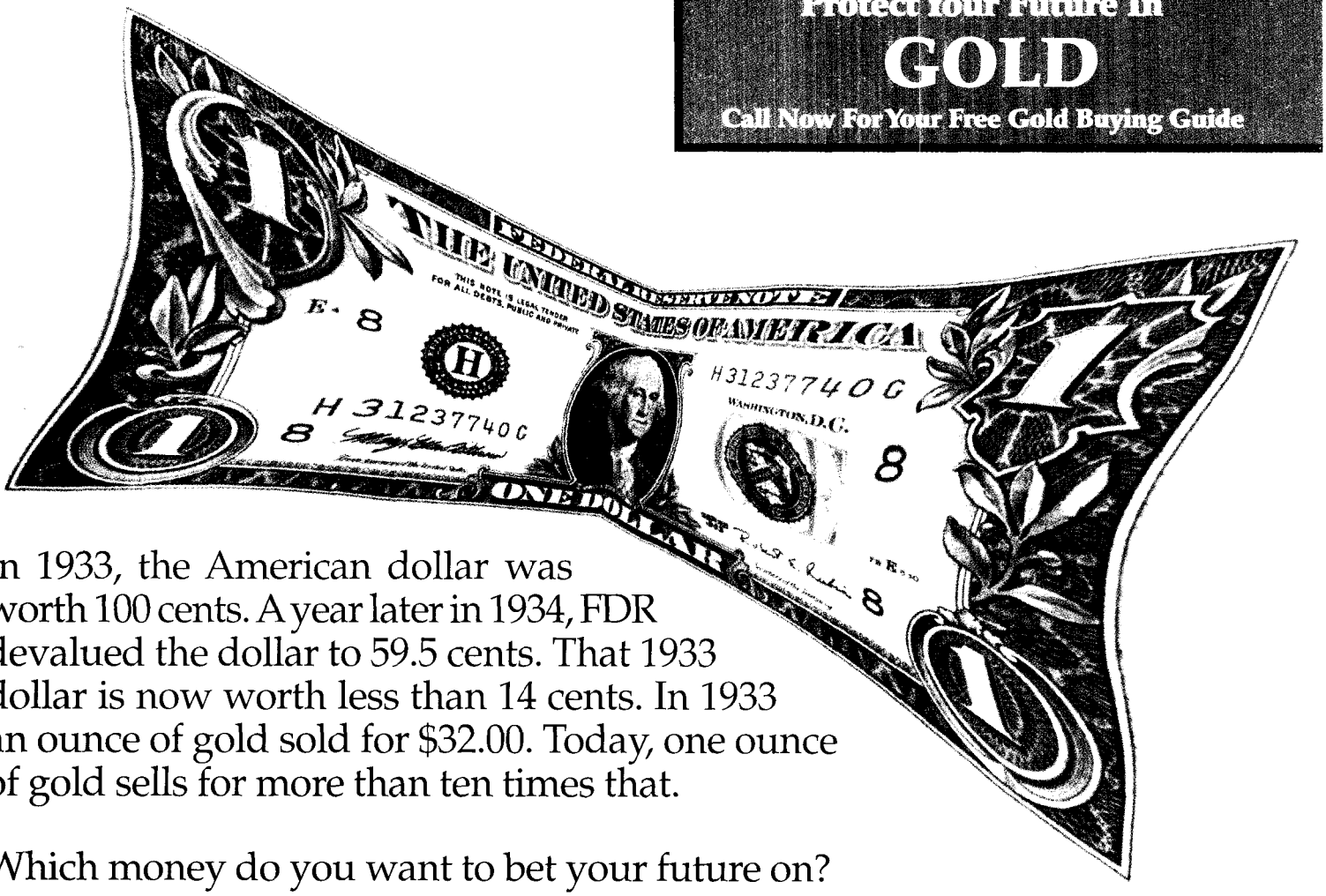

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It is time for someone to say out loud what many China experts murmur in private: that in the matter of Taiwan, the Chinese obsession has no justification. Talk of "recovering" Taiwan ignores the fact that it has been ruled from China, as a Chinese province, for just twelve of the last 4,000 years.

The obsession, however, serves two purposes for the Communists. First, it helps them obtain popular legitimacy—a scarce commodity now that the ideological foundations of their rule have crumbled to nothing, and those sensational economic-growth curves have begun to level out. They respond by stoking the fires of nationalist ardor, keeping ever alive the memory of past "humiliations"—a good Chinese citizen is expected to have "moved on" from the horrors of Maoist rule (1949–76) while maintaining a high level of indignation about the Opium War (1840–42).

Second, the regime furthers its ambition to be master of Asia. As Ross H. Munro explained in these pages (Oct. 11, 1999), "Once China has Taiwan in its grasp, it will sit astride Japan's southern sea lanes, a lifeline connecting Japan to its petroleum supply as well as to several key markets. China would also effectively control all other nations' access from the east to the South China Sea, the crucial link between the Pacific and Indian oceans. The security of the Philippines would be immediately and acutely threatened, and other Southeast Asian nations would find themselves more vulnerable to Chinese coercion." Defeating an American policy of protecting Taiwan—or worse, showing America's commitment to be weak—would shift the balance of power throughout Asia away from the U.S. and toward China.

America also has a moral stake here that ought to be declared explicitly. This country is the champion of liberty. We have watched with wonder and joy as the people of Taiwan have erected the first constitutional democracy in Chinese history. The crushing of that bright flower under the heel of a brutish and lawless despotism would be an assault on all we believe, and have struggled for. Normal relations—diplomatic or commercial—with China would be impossible after such an outrage. In this context, it would not hurt to counter China's arrogant blustering with some tough words of our own—pointing out, for example, that an embargo on Chinese goods entering our country would shut down the Chinese economy swiftly.

The U.S.—and the rest of the world, too, but first and foremost the U.S.—faces a huge and difficult problem. The problem is not Taiwan, or even China; the problem is the Chinese Communist party. Coping with it will be a very high test of statesmanship.

In which connection we need to form some judgment, in this election year, about which of the candidates might pass that test (each of whom, of course, should study Mark Helprin's important piece in this issue, beginning on page 36). Let us begin by asking all presidential candidates how they would handle the current crisis. Sen. Bradley, to his credit, has given a forthright answer: He believes that China has a right to do as it pleases with Taiwan, and that it is no business of ours to interfere. Thank you, Senator. Now may we hear from the others?

Their Last Debate

Like a great white, Gore nosed in
On Bill Bradley, dorsal fin
Poking up in battle mode
So the viewers could decode
(Everyone remembered Jaws*)*
How tots vanish down those maws—
Prompting the devout to do
Beads for bathing W.

—W. H. von Dreele

CULTURE WATCH

A Traditional Marriage

WHEN the dust settled, everyone was down on *Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire?*, the scandalous Fox TV special, except the 23 million people who watched it.

Fox abandoned the child of its fancy when Rick Rockwell, né Richard Balkey, turned out to have been slapped with a restraining order in 1991 after a fiancée complained that he had threatened her. Rockwell, understandably, has shunned the limelight. Not so Darva Conger, his ex-wife, who has made the talk-show circuit to protest that she never thought she would win, and never considered herself hitched even after she did. "I'm a Christian woman. If I'm not married in a church with a preacher, I am not married before God, and I am not married in my heart." Yes, and she probably never modeled the swimsuit before God, or wore the evening dress in her heart either. The National Organization for Women condemned the spectacle. Given NOW's current makeup, the fact that the women contestants were competing to marry a man was probably the deal-breaker there. Open homosexuals filled the letters pages of the elite press with demands that their unions be recognized, if *Who Wants to Marry* . . . represents the norm of straight matrimony.

In fact, the show told us a lot about love and sex in 2000—and in any year. Women want to live with powerful men. Many forces, from comparative muscle mass to memories of one's parents to the rigors of childbearing, create the desire. "It is a truth universally acknowledged," Jane Austen began *Pride and Prejudice*, "that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." She

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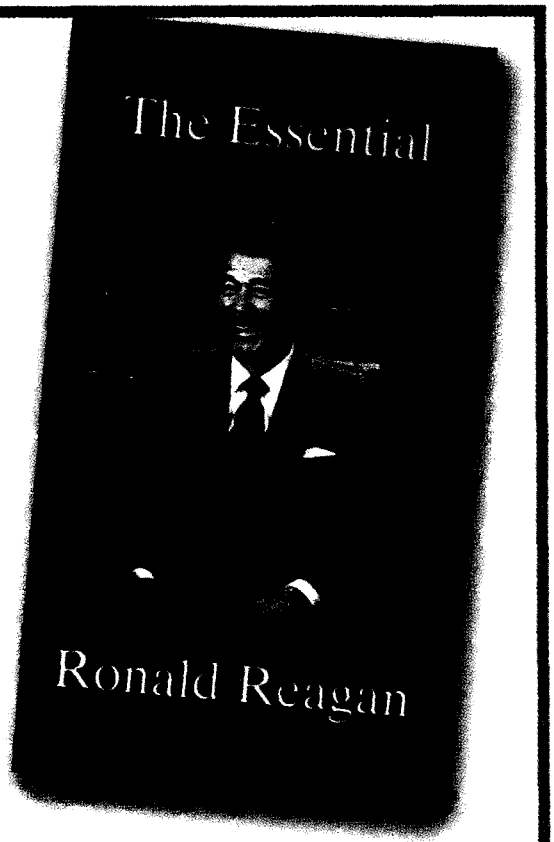
Once upon a time, before the Oval Office became infamous for groping and coffees, cigars and impeachment, thongs and stained dresses, America had a real president. A man of whom we were proud—RONALD REAGAN.



It is the conservative curse: Whenever you see the current Oval Office occupant on television or in the newspaper, from deep within emerges the lament—how *low* we have fallen in a decade, when a real man led our great nation.

How we miss Ronald Reagan! His presidency was a time of *pride*. It brought the world victory over the Soviet Union's reign of terror. It restored international respect for America. It gave us historic tax cuts and reduced the size of government.

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wrote this with a smile, and the ensuing novel shows how complicated the proposition is. But at the end, Elizabeth Bennet marries Mr. Darcy, whose income is 10,000 pounds a year. Even Austen's last and darkest novel, *Persuasion*, brings its heroine together with a prosperous captain in the Royal Navy.

Human nature being what it is, the real-life fulfillment of our desires is generally broken and harsh. People sin. For most of history, women have been sold as children, yoked in harems, or employed as concubines. In the United States, a compromise of Christianity and republicanism matched one woman and one man, and narrowed the sexual status gap. But like all compromises, it is subject to internal stresses. Christian heresies release passion into the world under the guise of a divine force of erotic love. Democracy, the bastard child of republicanism, asserts that all men (and women and children) are equal in fact, as well as in right. So we get fiancée-beaters, NOW, and gay rights.

But nature always returns. The Fox executives probably didn't have Horace in mind when they planned their blockbuster, but he had them in mind. "If you drive nature out with a pitchfork, she will soon find a way back." If we have scorned and ignored her, she returns in forms that are brutal and ludicrous—as Rick Rockwell and Darva Conger.

■ NOTES & ASIDES ■

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: Regarding your column on the pilotless Lear, there is one more incident that must stand as the tallest of the skyscrapers of air terror.

The crash of Japan Air Lines Flight 123 occurred on August 12, 1985, at Mt. Osutaka, Japan. Five hundred twenty people died in the crash. I have researched some of the details.

The aircraft was a Boeing 747-SR, scheduled to fly from Tokyo to Osaka with 524 people on board, including 15 crew.

Following a rupture of the aft pressure bulkhead, the plane floated down and around like a leaf (technically, a Dutch Roll) for nearly 35 minutes before crashing into Mt. Osutaka. Amazingly, there were four survivors. The cause of the crash was determined to have been faulty repair of the bulkhead.

In the wreckage, searchers found letters to children, parents, and spouses, last wills, and even poetry, all composed by passengers who were contemplating their ultimate fate while drifting around in the sky for those eternal minutes.

One can only imagine what that cabin must have been like and what those poor souls must have been thinking and feeling.

Thanks to the discipline of engineering and the laws of probability, these thoughts will remain only in our imaginations.

Yours truly,
Paul Bent
Long Beach, Calif.

Dear Mr. Bent: Thanks for your graphic account of that awful business.

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Bill: Even before your famous statement on the subject, Fulton J. Sheen wrote the following (*War and Guilt*, 1941): "The masses are capable of far better judgments about world affairs than the intelligentsia. If I wanted a good moral judgment about the war, I should a thousand times prefer to get it from a garage man, a filling-station attendant, a WPA worker, a grocer's clerk, or a delivery boy, than from 23 Ph.D. professors I know about in just one American university. The reason is not difficult to find. The educated know how to rationalize evil; the masses do not. Evil to them is still evil; they have never learned to sugar-coat it with sophism. They never got enough smattering of Einstein to sophomorically pontificate: 'everything is relative.' If they do wrong, they still call it wrong. Their judgments are better because their moral sense is higher, for virtue does not increase in direct ratio with learning."

Best wishes,
Tom
[Thomas C. Reeves, Dept. of History, Univ. of Wisconsin]
Franksville, Wis.

Dear Tom: There are always pearls, on reading Fulton Sheen. How happy that you are working on his biography.

Cordially, Bill

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: Alas, we are in the desert once again—

Hommage Y? 2Kuoque?

The Millennium coresigned with Buckley,
Whose Talents shone rightward, voluminously.
Except for the Weed
And Bach Phoenix-teased,
His Matter wed Form ineluctably.

Best wishes,
Pete Petrus
New York, N.Y.

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: A friend of mine, a public-school teacher, was trying to curb use of the F-word in her classroom. She offered "extra points" to any child who could find the word in a dictionary. The greatest offender took up the challenge and brought this definition to the class's attention: Fornication Under the Consent of the King. The class was so disillusioned with this definition that use of the word dramatically decreased. Not only did my friend achieve her goal, she actually got some of her kids to go to the library for the first time!

Sincerely yours,
Patty Sweeney
Staten Island, N.Y.

Dear Ms. Sweeney: That is *very* good news. I wonder what would be the traffic to the library if compliant young ladies were there waiting for the boys?

Cordially,

—WFB

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 ■

McCainiacs

John + the media = ♥

RAMESH PONNURU

TWO days before the South Carolina primary, John McCain held a rally outside his state campaign headquarters. The crowd was small, not even filling a 25-car parking lot. Where were McCain's supporters? About a third of the people there, I figured, were reporters. Then I remembered: Those *are* his biggest supporters.

As they proved the next day. You had to look between the lines of the coverage with a microscope to get a hint that McCain was faltering. Only the *Washington Post* mentioned (briefly) the small, unenthusiastic crowds he was drawing.

As it happened, McCain's loss in South Carolina was a turning point in the 2000 campaign. This is not, as the media would have it, because George W. Bush beat him by running a harsh, far-right campaign that will haunt him for the rest of the year. It's because the primary was the moment when the media themselves finally turned on Bush with full force—and their hostility may well be a problem all year.

Just six months ago, Bush was getting great press. This was partly because his principal challenger seemed to be Steve Forbes, a conservative. Also, since Bush looked likely to be the next president, the media wanted to portray him as less conservative than he is (and more praiseworthy by their standards). The media have invested deeply in the notion that Republicans win only by moving leftward. So when Bush was successful, it was obviously due to his moderation; and when he stumbles, it must be because he has moved rightward.

The most important reason reporters have turned on Bush, of course, is that he's now taking on their hero. They like McCain personally, appreciate his accessibility, and applaud his leftward lurches; they assume he's not serious about opposing abortion and gun control. Mike

John McCain by Roman Genn

Murphy, a strategist for McCain, recently described the media as the campaign's "base," the equivalent of Bush's base among religious conservatives. Nor is the media's romance with McCain a secret affair; it is openly acknowledged by almost every reporter in Washington. The acknowledgment of bias just never induces repentance.

The media never call McCain on his misstatements of fact. His recent, otherworldly contention that he had won about two-thirds of the Republican vote in New Hampshire went unchallenged. When his campaign first denied making phone calls against Bush in Michigan and then admitted it after the contest was over, few reporters termed the denial a lie. Reporters ignore the evidence that McCain doesn't understand campaign-finance law. They don't ask how he can call himself a "Wilsonian" while trashing President Clinton for conducting "foreign policy as social work"; we have to accept on faith that McCain is a deep thinker on foreign policy.

Of course, not everyone in the establishment press is a sucker for McCain. Richard L. Berke has written some tough stories for the *New York Times*. Over at *U.S. News & World Report*, Gloria Borger has noted that McCain "is winging it in lots of domestic-policy areas" and uses the need for campaign-finance reform as a dodge in other areas. More often, though, reporters find these weaknesses charming. In the *Washington Post*, Dana Milbank wrote that McCain has no brain trust, that his campaign sometimes gets policy details wrong, and that the way his mind works can be inferred from an aide's remark that when McCain watches TV, "he flips from game to game, never getting the sense of how one game is going because he's watching fourteen." But not to worry: McCain's "informal" style allows for "creativity and flexibility."

The media-swoon for McCain is not confined to liberals. Even among conservatives, there is no pundit who is for Bush the way that William Kristol, his *Weekly Standard* colleague Tucker Carlson, *Wall Street Journal* writer Dorothy Rabinowitz, and columnist Arianna Huffington are for McCain. (Donald Lambro at the *Washington Times* and Russ Smith at *New York Press* are pro-Bush, but not as high-profile.) But it is mainly a liberal phenomenon, producing the spectacle of Al Hunt and E. J. Dionne Jr. emerging every few weeks to reassure conservatives that the senator really is a rock-ribbed right-winger, even if the people who say so are mostly, well, liberals.

But now that McCain's campaign has turned serious, the media's flirtation is no longer playful and innocent. During and after the South Carolina primary, the media pounded Bush relentlessly for the supposed viciousness of his campaign. "One of the dirtiest I've ever covered," Tim Russert said on *Today*. If Bush goes on to lose, either in the primaries or in the fall, the conventional wisdom will be that it was his tactics in South Carolina that doomed him. It's more or less the same thing the media said about the 1992 Republican convention in Houston, where Bush's father was portrayed as pandering to the Right.

Newsweek, as in 1992, has taken the lead. Back then, Joe Klein wrote that the convention rhetoric—mostly platform pablum, as at all modern con-

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ventions—was "double-ply, wall-to-wall ugly." After South Carolina, Howard Fineman wrote in *Newsweek* that Bush's "victory came at a steep cost. He had been forced to run far to the right—and deep in mud. Across the country, Bush's 'favorable' ratings plummeted as he and his allies went about the grim business of savaging McCain." (When not "savaging" McCain, Bush was "carpet-bombing" him.)

■

Now that McCain's campaign has turned serious, the media's flirtation is no longer playful and innocent.

■

McCain no doubt sincerely believes that Bush played dirty; many politicians believe their own press releases, especially when the papers reprint them. But the worst savagery that Fineman comes up with is a mailing including these lines about McCain—cover your ears, Gentle Readers: "He claims he's conservative but he's pushed for higher taxes and waffled on protecting innocent human life. He claims to be a campaign-finance reformer, but his plan would silence pro-family groups while giving a blank check to Washington union bosses." The first sentence is strictly true, the second merely hyperbolic. Toward the end of his article, Fineman mentions that a Bush supporter had questioned McCain's commitment to veterans. That *was* pretty bad—but Bush later declared that he did not agree with the attack.

The same issue of *Newsweek* has two other articles on Bush's thuggery, lest readers miss the point. The only other example of such thuggery, though, is a buy of "ads on Christian radio insinuating that McCain is under the sway of pro-abortionists." After McCain lost South Carolina, one of *Newsweek*'s writers, Jonathan Alter, confessed on Don Imus's show that it was "hard for us to cover" the campaign, so distressing were the attacks on McCain. Imus later remarked that Alter "sounded like he was going to slit his wrists."

When Bill Bradley complained that Al Gore was winning by distorting his record, many commentators depicted him as a whiner and Gore as tough. But nobody accused McCain of whining. Instead, the press, with the honorable exception of the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page, adopted his spin completely. As Paul Gigot remarked, reporters were talking about a newly sophisticated, high-tech South Carolina when McCain looked strong; when he lost, the state "reverted to being a confederacy of crackers and Jesus freaks."

The standard pundit complaint about negative campaigning is that it turns people off from politics. Indeed, the McCain campaign argued before the primary that Bush was deliberately trying to keep voter turnout low. In South Carolina, however, turnout was extremely high, and voters said they didn't find Bush's campaign harsh. So what's the objection? One can only conclude that, odd though it may seem, a lot of political reporters don't like politics. They enjoy the attention they get during close races, but they resent not being able to direct the conversation the way they can between elections. When politicians and voters communicate with each other directly, the results can be messy and unpleasant.

Whether Bush moved dangerously far to the right in South Carolina is also questionable. He went too far South when he spoke at Bob Jones University, which will hurt him outside South Carolina. But Bush didn't suddenly become an anti-abortion crusader, having neither altered his position a jot nor talked much about it. People who say Bush will pay for defending "Big Tobacco" are forgetting that McCain's anti-tobacco bill failed after a skillful PR effort by the industry. And liberals are dreaming if they think Bush is making a mistake by talking about tax cuts. Tax cuts may not move as many voters as they used to, but there is no evidence at all for the media's view that they actually hurt Republicans.

Contrary to Fineman, Bush's favorables haven't "plummeted" nationally. But there's no question that they have among reporters. Bush's problem isn't that voters have recoiled from his campaign; it's that the national media have, and over time that might affect voters.

Gov. Bush must really be coming to hate the national media. That's probably a good thing—if he survives. **NR**

■ CAMPAIGN 2000 II ■

McCain vs. Madison

A battle the senator will lose

MICHAEL BARONE

JOHN MCCAIN is a warrior. He is plainly enjoying his fight with George W. Bush and the Republican establishment. And he looks forward to fighting Al Gore and the Democrats. But his biggest quarrel, whatever the outcome of these fights, is with James Madison.

For McCain, like many of his voters and journalistic cheerers-on, is fundamentally at odds with the view of politics and government Madison set out in *Federalist* 10. Madison argued that a free republic would always produce "factions" that would be "united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest." Economic interest, he argued, would produce many factions, with the greatest danger being the amalgamation of the numerous poor out to seize the property of the relatively few rich. But factions might also coalesce around "different opinions concerning religion, concerning government and many other points," and even over "the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions."

Since "the latent causes of faction are . . . sown in the nature of man," Madison said, and since faction was potentially harmful, "relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its effects." Under the Constitution he had done so much to design, Madison argued, the power of one faction would tend to be checked by another. Importantly, the Constitution's three branches of government, and the coexistence of the federal government with

Mr. Barone is a senior writer for *U.S. News & World Report*, and co-author of *The Almanac of American Politics*.

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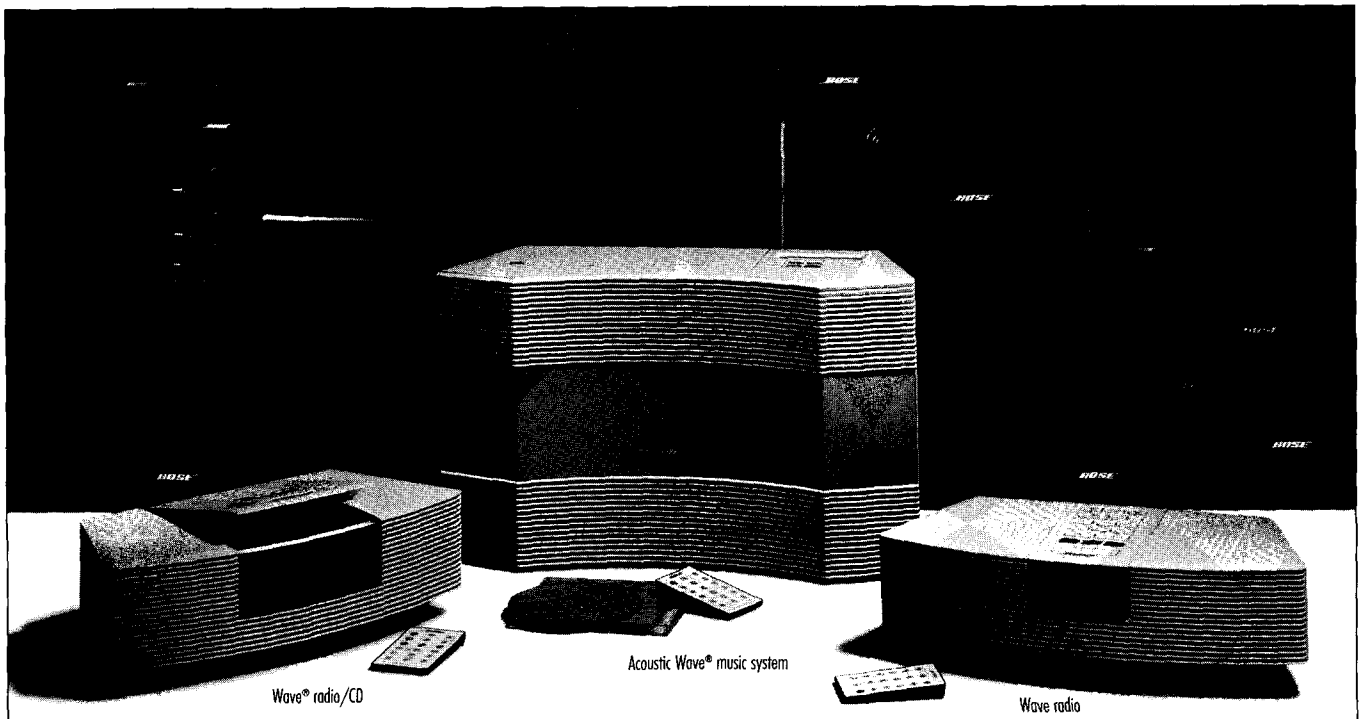

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the governments of the states, would prevent even a faction that temporarily attains a majority from violating the rights or seizing the property of the minority.

John McCain seems to disagree. Interestingly enough, similar attitudes can be seen in other Naval Academy graduates who have sought the presidency. Like Jimmy Carter, McCain promises never to lie to the American people. Like Ross Perot, he campaigns against Washington insiders and influence-peddlers. Like both of them, he believes that disinterested experts can solve any problem if they just sit down together, free from the influence of lobbyists and campaign contributors, and work out a solution everyone can agree on. All you need is honor and technical expertise.

The Naval Academy, remember, is an engineering school, and engineering is a discipline in which problems and solutions are thought to be technical; personal interest and personal beliefs are not supposed to count at all. Similarly, in the military it is generally thought that solutions can be arrived at through value-free technical means. Political choices are supposed to be made by civilian leaders; the military officer just figures out the best way to get things done. (One suspects that the military doesn't quite work this way, but that is a subject for another day.) Put all the experts together, Carter believed, and you can come up with a program that can produce cheap and plentiful energy. Almost any problem, Perot said, snapping his fingers, can be solved just like that. McCain, asked on the campaign trail about many issues, promises to "convene a panel of experts" to come up quickly with the best solution.

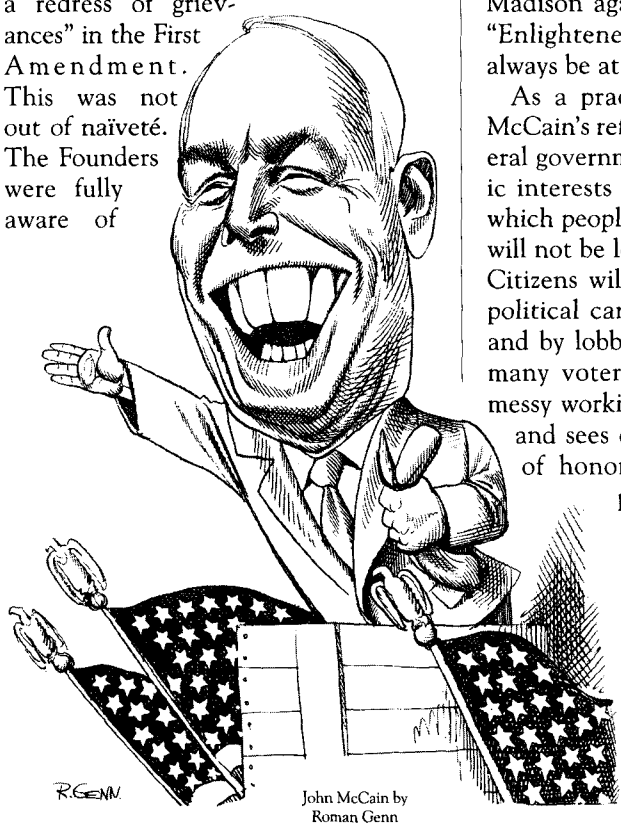
Not so Madison. Nor was he ignorant of the evils McCain and his backers decry. They complain about cacophony and gridlock and argument. But Madison was familiar with robust debate and with campaigning far more negative than McCain is launching against Bush or vice versa. McCain's campaign-finance bills would limit free speech. Madison, as chief sponsor of the Bill of Rights in the First Congress, wrote the First Amendment, to protect the widest possible range of political speech. Madison did not write the First Amendment to protect nude dancing, flag burning, or Internet pornography. But McCain, who would prohibit advertising from mentioning congressmen's names within 60 days of an election, would leave it protecting very little else. Liberals complain about conservatives who want to amend the Constitution (flag burning) or challenge the Supreme Court's interpretation thereof (abortion). But they applaud McCain's calls for limiting political speech. Indeed, House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt goes so far as to call for amending the First Amendment in order to allow the restrictions on political speech that he and McCain support.

■

McCain is fundamentally at odds with the view of politics and government Madison set out in *Federalist* 10.

■

Also, McCain and his admirers complain about lobbying. But Madison put the right to "petition the government for a redress of grievances" in the First Amendment. This was not out of naïveté. The Founders were fully aware of what lobbying was: Franklin for the 20 years before the Revolution was agent for Pennsylvania and other colonies—their lobbyist—in London. Madison understood that local interests, in the exercise of their freedom, would inevitably feel a need to lobby a central government that had much to say about their affairs, whether it was the imperial government in London or the federal government in the Constitution's federal capital. Lobbying is as American as apple pie. Madison placed his bet not on limits to speaking and lobbying, but on freedom to do these. This has proved a good bet for more than 200 years.



John McCain by Roman Genn

McCain would reverse direction. Limit speech, limit lobbying, and let honorable experts come up with solutions. Madison's reply: "It could not be a less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency." McCain believes, as Madison states the argument, that "enlightened statesmen will be able to adjust these clashing interests, and render them all subservient to the public good." But Madison again has a powerful reply: "Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm."

As a practical matter, of course, McCain's reforms cannot work. A federal government that affects economic interests and decides issues about which people have deeply held beliefs will not be left alone by a free people. Citizens will try to affect it through political campaigns that cost money and by lobbying public officials. Like many voters, McCain looks on the messy workings of Madison's republic and sees corruption. His own view of honorable men pursuing the public good is more attractive to many voters. But Madison proved as conclusively as anything can be proved in politics that it cannot work in a free republic. McCain may win battles with Bush and Gore. But he is not likely to prevail against Madison. **NR**

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■ LAW ■

The Agony of Diallo

Black and blue in New York, again

JONATHAN FOREMAN

THE acquittal of the policemen in the Diallo case was good news. The conduct of the mixed-race jury in Albany—both during and after the trial—was exemplary. And the small scale of the demonstrations that followed the verdict was gratifying, especially given the malign forces—led by Al Sharpton—calling for a conviction.

So again, good news; so good, in fact, that it's easy to forget that the shooting does raise troubling issues. An innocent man was, after all, gunned down by those entrusted with the public safety.

The Diallo disaster also makes clear that major New York institutions are unwilling or unable to come to terms with the beneficial changes the city has undergone in the last few years. The *New York Times*'s coverage, for example, was desperate to paint the shooting as a symptom and consequence of overly aggressive, "racist" police work—as if the Koch era of brutal but ineffective policing had never ended.

And, given the panicky way the cops behaved when they saw Amadou Diallo enter his own home, one might have thought they were patrolling the vastly more dangerous Bronx of a decade ago.

To be sure, the original indictment for murder rather than for manslaughter was a politically motivated travesty on the part of Bronx D.A. Robert Johnson, a man too intelligent to have believed for a moment that these four officers were cruising the city looking for a random black man to kill.

The *Times*, in this regard, has waged a dishonest campaign—one that reeks of

Mr. Foreman is a film critic for the *New York Post* and a frequent writer about New York and its problems.

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the paper's institutional prejudice against the white Catholic ethnics who dominate the NYPD. Even more depressing than the snobbish assumption that cops are uneducated bigots has been the attribution of significance to the fact that the police fired 41 shots at Mr. Diallo (of which 19 hit him). This number was relevant—if at all—only as circumstantial evidence that the shooting was not some kind of execution, but rather a lethally panicked response to a perceived threat, as the officers claimed.

Yet, even relatively intelligent observers, such as the *Times*'s Clyde Haberman, have assumed that it is somehow more malicious to kill someone with forty bullets than with four. It is true that there is something particularly upsetting about a corpse riddled with bullets, and the large number of rounds discharged could well imply poor fire discipline and inadequate training on the part of the cops. But the idea that you can deduce racism or cruelty from the number is absurd. Underlying the idea is a perception—drawn from films and TV—that it is possible to "shoot to wound," a notion as applicable to real life as ordering the NYPD to set its *Star Trek* phasers on "stun."

Still, even after you have dismissed all the would-be exploiters of Amadou Diallo's death, there remains something profoundly disturbing about an innocent man being gunned down by the police in the doorway of his own home because he acted in a way the officers considered frighteningly "inappropriate."

When confronted by the officers, the African immigrant took out his wallet. Perhaps he assumed, given his experience of Third World policing, that he was being asked for his papers—although showing one's ID to a police officer would not be an irrational response on anyone's part. Given that the cops were not in uniform and yet were waving guns, and that Mr. Diallo lived in a relatively dangerous area, he could even have assumed he was being robbed. We will never know. But if he had thrown himself on the ground, raised his hands above his head, and screamed for mercy, he might have survived.

That would, of course, have been a revolting picture. And many reasonable people who lack the obsessive anti-police animus of the *New York Times* are troubled by it. It is not enough for the department to point to statistics showing how few civilians it shoots compared with other forces. Nor should anyone be satisfied with the argument that eggs must be broken to make an omelet—the idea, in other words, that effective law enforcement requires the occasional slaying of an innocent citizen.

■

The idea that you can deduce racism or cruelty from the number of shots fired is absurd.

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The officers involved will probably face the double jeopardy of a federal civil-rights inquiry; because there is little evidence to support such a case, they are unlikely to be convicted. They will also face an internal inquiry. Given that at least two of them could well have been found guilty of negligent homicide in a properly conducted criminal trial, the department would be right to discipline them severely.

But if the NYPD is to avoid such catastrophes in the future, it will have to make a cultural adjustment to the new New York that is largely the creation of the department's own success. This doesn't mean abandoning policies that have worked so spectacularly. But it does mean that the police—like the *New York Times*—must get used to the fact that New York is no longer either a "war zone" or a "zoo."

We know that the officers who killed Mr. Diallo were in the grip of profound fear. They were right to be cautious; but it is far from clear that their instant fear of a black man in a doorway was remotely appropriate to present conditions in the Bronx.

It's regrettable that the attacks on the NYPD by the *Times* and other critics have been so savage; they will probably result in a reflexively defiant reaction from the department, claiming that there is nothing wrong with its procedures. This is a shame, because even in a vast organization like the NYPD, tragedies like the Diallo shooting could be made less likely. (An NYPD lieutenant told me that the Street Crimes Unit grew too fast: There are too many officers with "enough experience to make them cocky, but not enough to really know what they're doing.") Because such incidents tend to take place in the poor, minority areas where the police—correctly—concentrate their efforts, they feed the Left's cartoon fantasies that the NYPD is an occupying army.

So while the acquittal ensured that a tragedy was not followed by a travesty, it will require a change of psychological gears at police headquarters for any actual good to come out of this terrible affair. And if the *Times*, Al Sharpton, and the rest really care at all about public safety in New York, they will give the NYPD the space to do so. **NR**

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■ PUBLIC POLICY ■

Amnesty National

An immigration puzzle

JOHN J. MILLER

GETTING fired last October may be the best thing that ever happened to nine illegal immigrants living in Minneapolis. Then again, maybe not; they're currently slated for deportation. Yet each of them is also $8,000 richer, thanks to a settlement they reached in January with their former employer, the Holiday Inn Express, after the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the National Labor Relations Board weighed in on their behalf. Attorney general Janet Reno is now thinking about legalizing their status—giving them green cards, so they would never have to go home.

An odd result, to be sure. Illegal immigrants aren't supposed to be here in the first place, and hiring them is forbidden. Handing them pink slips shouldn't be a big deal—but it becomes one, apparently, when they try to unionize.

In August, the Holiday Inn staff voted to form a union. In October, says hotel manager Kevin Koenig, came a tip that some of the staff weren't legal. Koenig, who says he was once raided for employing illegal aliens at another hotel, called the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which then reviewed each employee's papers. Nine were arrested, a few weeks before their union was scheduled to begin collective bargaining.

Koenig says the timing was just a coincidence. Labor activists around the country called it retaliation. On February 16, the executive council of the AFL-CIO took a dramatic step, inspired by controversies like this one. It called for the federal government to grant an amnesty to the estimated 6 million illegal aliens living here—in essence, to pardon them for breaking the law—and to make them permanent legal residents. There had been rumblings about such a move for months, but it was considered highly unlikely that labor would reverse its traditional stance in support of tough illegal-immigration laws.

Business groups and ethnic organizations applauded the AFL-CIO's decision. "It's a historic statement," says Frank Sharry, head of the National Immigration Forum.

It is certainly that. Pro-immigration forces spent much of the 1990s on the defensive, trying to fend off ballot initiatives like California's Proposition 187, and legislation that reduced legal entries or cut welfare benefits for noncitizens. Now those forces have been invigorated, suddenly and unexpectedly, by labor's turnaround, and are eager to push their agenda through Congress. Their wish list includes everything from the amnesty proposal to a substantial increase in lawful admissions.

And they just might win a big chunk of it. The labor market, for one thing, is crying out for help. With unemployment hitting a 30-year low and employers close to tapping out the welfare-to-work pool, businesses increasingly can't find people to fill jobs. "We have a worker shortage," says John Gay of the American Hotel and Motel Association. "We must boost the number of available workers, and we can't avoid immigration as a way of doing that." He isn't alone, being co-chairman of a new group calling itself the Essential Worker Immigration Coalition; its members include the American Health Care Association, the National Restaurant Association, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. On February 14, the coalition sent a letter lobbying Congress "to ease the [worker] shortage by allowing employers to more easily hire foreign workers."

Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan also has chimed in. Last July, in House testimony, he said that a tight labor market could fuel inflation. "If we can open up our immigration rolls significantly, that will clearly make that less and less of a potential problem." He has repeated the recommendation several times since.

Big labor traditionally has opposed immigration, for an obvious reason: A population increase means more competition for jobs, which depresses wages, especially for low-income workers. Unions were a driving force behind the immigration restrictions of the 1920s, which shut off the Ellis Island generation of newcomers. More recently, unions backed Congress's 1986 sanctions on employers, which made it illegal to hire undocumented immigrants. That legislation also forced labor to swallow a bitter pill—an amnesty of 3 million illegal aliens then living in the United States. The idea, to borrow a phrase from the time, was to shut the back door and wipe the slate clean. The unions accepted the trade-off, thinking the new enforcement strategy would prevent further illegal immigration.

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Handing illegal immigrants pink slips shouldn't be a big deal—but it becomes one when they try to unionize.

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They were spectacularly wrong. The back door didn't just remain wide open; it came unhinged. Honest employers were easily duped by fake papers, while dishonest ones continued to hire without fear of prosecution. Making this system work would require something akin to national I.D. cards, a federal registry of workers, and vigorous enforcement—in short, an extravagant big-government operation of the kind many conservatives and others resist.

The 1986 amnesty backfired in another significant way. When those 3 million illegal aliens acquired green cards, many of them quit their under-the-table jobs in search of better positions. This left behind a vacuum, creating a new demand for low-wage labor—a "giant sucking sound" in reverse, which pulled many job-seeking Mexicans northward.

What chiefly irritated the unions, however, was the complete failure of employer sanctions. "They became a tool of exploitation," says Muzzafar Chishti of the Union of Needletrades,

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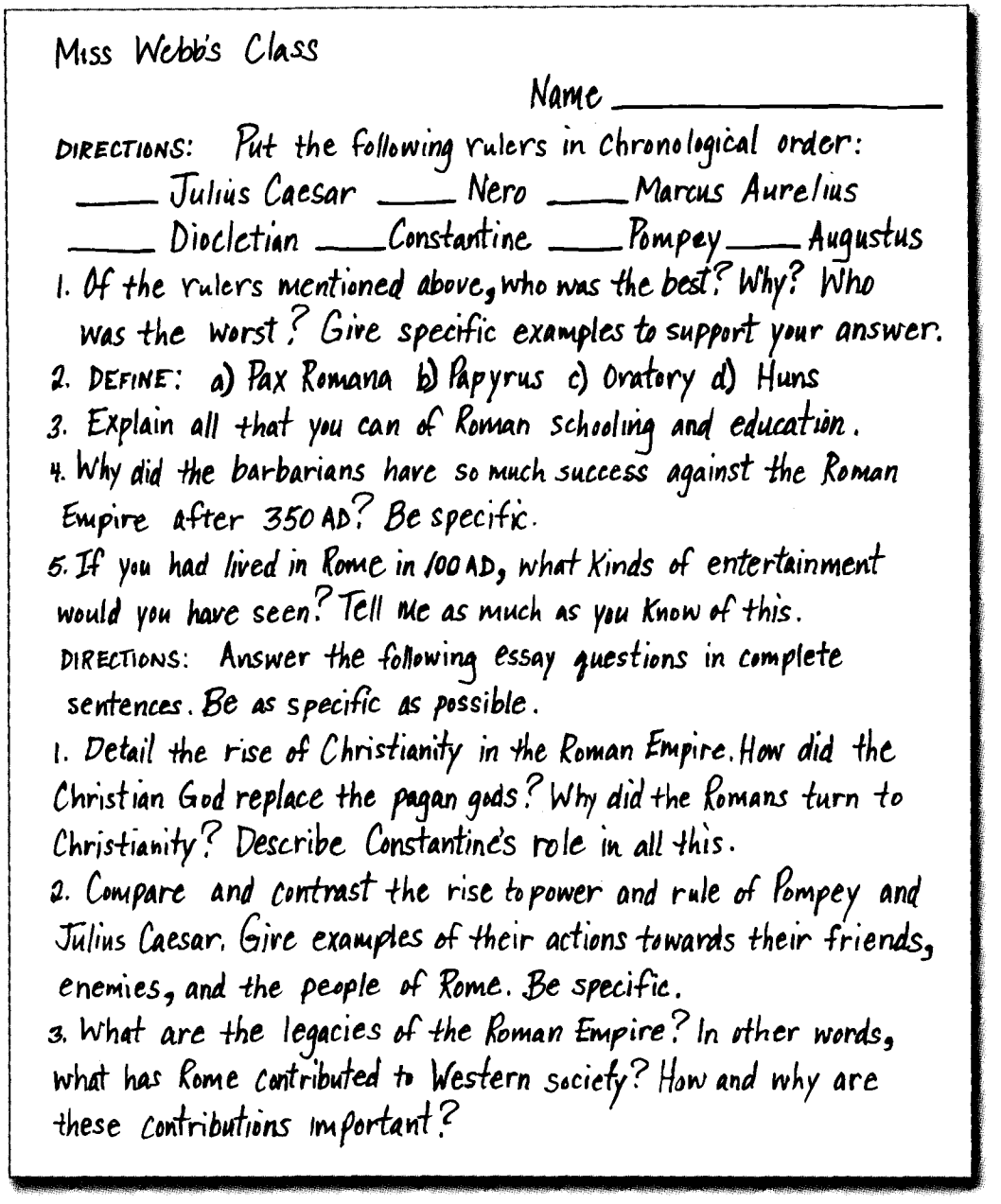

Miss Webb's Class

Name _____

DIRECTIONS: Put the following rulers in chronological order:

_____ Julius Caesar _____ Nero _____ Marcus Aurelius

_____ Diocletian _____ Constantine _____ Pompey _____ Augustus

1. Of the rulers mentioned above, who was the best? Why? Who was the worst? Give specific examples to support your answer.
2. DEFINE: a) Pax Romana b) Papyrus c) Oratory d) Huns
3. Explain all that you can of Roman schooling and education.
4. Why did the barbarians have so much success against the Roman Empire after 350 AD? Be specific.
5. If you had lived in Rome in 100 AD, what kinds of entertainment would you have seen? Tell me as much as you know of this.

DIRECTIONS: Answer the following essay questions in complete sentences. Be as specific as possible.

1. Detail the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire. How did the Christian God replace the pagan gods? Why did the Romans turn to Christianity? Describe Constantine's role in all this.
2. Compare and contrast the rise to power and rule of Pompey and Julius Caesar. Give examples of their actions towards their friends, enemies, and the people of Rome. Be specific.
3. What are the legacies of the Roman Empire? In other words, what has Rome contributed to Western society? How and why are these contributions important?

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Industrial, and Textile Employees. "Employers would threaten undocumented workers if they tried to organize a union." The AFL-CIO's February statement specifically cited the Minneapolis case as an example.

Also motivating the AFL-CIO was the long-term decline in union membership. Since the 1950s, the percentage of unionized workers has fallen by more than half. According to *The Progressive*, labor must organize 400,000 new workers each year just to make sure its membership rolls stay even. With immigrants accounting for as much as one-quarter of all workforce entrants, and illegal aliens constituting a sizeable minority of this group, it makes a certain kind of sense for union bureaucracies to call for an amnesty. That position may hurt current members by applying downward pressure on wages, but it improves labor's ability to sustain itself as an institution. It also marks the AFL-CIO's emergence as a post-national organization, one that has willingly decoupled itself from the direct interests of its American members in favor of foreigners who might join sometime in the future.

The biggest problem with an amnesty is that it undercuts the rule of law. If the government offers sanctuary to its illegal population every decade or so—like a school library forgiving fines in order to recover long-overdue books—it provides a new incentive for undesirable behavior. On the other hand, there's a pragmatic argument for amnesty: Those 6 million illegals are not going to be shipped home anytime soon. A handful of them will be, to be sure; but the U.S. simply lacks the moral, political, and financial will to stage a massive deportation. Huge numbers of illegal aliens have U.S.-born children, who are citizens. Whole industries depend on their productivity. Many are already in line to migrate here legally; they'll get green cards within the next few years. In other words: They're here, they're near, get used to it.

By offering sanctuary to illegals, the government provides an incentive for undesirable behavior.

That's why immigration restrictionists are typically willing to put amnesty on the political table. "There's an appeal to the idea of trading amnesty for some kind of real reform," says Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies, a group that supports reduced admission levels. Eliminating the visa lottery and the brother-sister category of family-based admissions—the two most powerful engines of the "chain migration" by which immigration results in more immigration—could go a long way toward sealing a deal. This arrangement might even attract libertarian supporters of immigration, who could see it as a way to create pressure for an admissions policy that places a greater emphasis on skills.

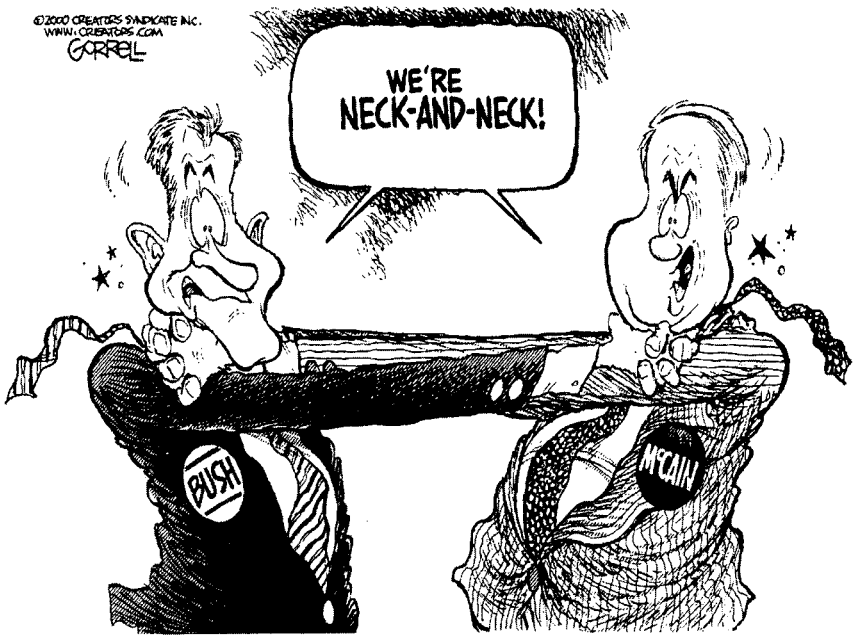
All this seems unlikely, however. A unified front featuring business, labor, ethnic, and religious organizations clamoring for an amnesty won't face much organized opposition. The only resistance would come from Republicans and conservative Democrats in Congress unwilling to explain an amnesty to skeptical voters.

A series of modest amnesties—for certain Central Americans and Haitians, for instance—now seems within reach. More visas for high-tech workers are also likely, and unskilled farm labor may see an increase as well. Liberals will surely push for new entitlements, too, such as food stamps and Medicaid for noncitizens.

The Clinton administration so far has not commented on the AFL-CIO's proposal, but it has taken a soft approach to illegal immigration in recent months. It did the unions' bidding last October when the EEOC said that illegal aliens have the same rights as citizens to nondiscrimination on the job. And the INS announced that its agents will steer clear of communities when census takers go knocking on doors this spring; they don't want to scare away the illegals whose numbers will help Democrats during the next round of congressional apportionment and redistricting. If Republicans make a serious grab for Hispanic votes in the presidential election, watch for Vice President Gore to hint that he favors an amnesty.

Meanwhile, back in Minneapolis, INS regional director Curtis Aljets is broadcasting how much he regrets becoming a hotel's union-busting tool. "If we had it to do over again, we probably wouldn't do it," he told the *Star Tribune*.

Years from now, when the effects of another big amnesty take hold, many people might well end up sharing that sentiment. **NR**



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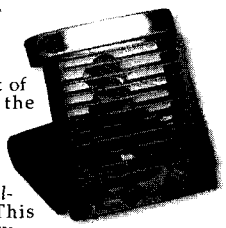

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■ MAN'S BEST FRIEND ■

Fufus & Fidos

At the Westminster Dog Show

JONAH GOLDBERG

New York City

SUDDENLY, John was the favorite to win. "Johnny" could switch from taciturn to playful in an instant, but he was—above all things—a fierce competitor, a purebred warrior like his father and grandfather before him. Only months earlier, he'd been written off as a long shot whose few wins were undeserved, establishment-bucking flukes. Now all that stood between him and the brass ring was the "son": the pedigreed scion of bluebloods dripping with the sense of entitlement that comes with the blessing of the establishment. The son had never suffered, never sacrificed. His victories came easily. Throughout 1999, the pundits had pegged him as the obvious favorite. Still, Johnny, the outsider, had an uncanny appeal. "There's just something about Johnny that everybody loves. I can't explain it," said one experienced observer.

John McCain versus George W. Bush? A good guess. But while other journalists were eating Krispy Kremes on the Straight Talk Express, I was wading deep into the World Series of doggiedom, the 124th annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show held at Madison Square Garden. This is the second-oldest annual "sporting event" in America, only one year younger than the Kentucky Derby.

This contest was supposed to be between "Johnny," a.k.a. Hi-Tech Johnny J of Boxerton, and "Treson," a.k.a. Lake Cove That's My Boy. Hi-Tech Johnny is a boxer, and Treson is a standard poodle. More accurately, he is *the* poodle—the "winningest dog of all time of any breed," according to *Sports Illustrated*.

One hopes the analogy to presidential politics will not hold, since both dogs were bested by a third contender in a stunning upset. The winner, the Al Gore of the race, was a springer spaniel appropriately named "Shameless"—which is especially ironic, because many of the dogs seem so embarrassed to be here in the first place.

As you walk through the backstage grooming area, you see maybe a hundred dogs standing on what appear to be small ironing boards. The longer-haired breeds—Pekinese, Shih Tzus, sheepdogs, etc.—are so covered in special dog hair-rollers that, at first glance, the beasts appear to be under attack by bright blue grasshoppers. One bearded collie being assaulted by a hairdryer has his bangs bundled into a rhino horn of fur; he looks up at me with an expression of intense humiliation. A caged German shepherd is in even worse straits: "Please," his eyes plead, "kill me now."

It's not an easy life, and one would forgive the pups for mounting an insurrection. But the dogs are invariably better behaved than the humans at the show. The event is crowded, loud, and thoroughly disorienting. There is a great deal of commerce: Dog-food cookbooks, dog-motif jewelry ("The Fine Arf Collection"), and even canine self-help manuals ("When Pets Come Between Partners") are hawked at stalls lining every wall. In the area where the dogs are put on display, thousands of people push, poke, shove, and shriek. In this tense, almost gladiatorial locker-room atmosphere, owners and groomers can get pretty testy.

But—among the canines, at least—there's no biting, and no dogfights. Sure, there is the occasional excretory "accident," but most dogs wait politely in long lines with their owners to use one of the sandboxes designated for that sort of business.

In fact, to a dog-lover like me, it is precisely the un-canine nature of the event that is so disconcerting. Walking amidst these almost Prozac-calm descendants of wolves, one starts to worry; the dogs are almost too well behaved. Is that golden retriever with the ribbons in his hair suffering from what the Marxists would call "false consciousness"? Or is he just biding his time, waiting for the right moment to spark the mutiny? "Canines! Revolution! Throw off your leashes!"

■

Walking amidst these almost Prozac-calm descendants of wolves, one starts to worry; the dogs are too well behaved.

■

Perhaps not. But there is something odd about 2,600 dogs crammed into a room over two days, without a single recorded instance of a chewed shoe or nipped ankle. Indeed, this passivity reinforces the misgivings many dog-lovers have about the world of dog shows. Westminster rates dogs according to American Kennel Club guidelines, which judge appearance, not behavior; a champion dog is simply the one that best conforms to the picture in the guidebook. In other words, the "best" Labrador retriever at Westminster may not even know how to swim, let alone retrieve, but his ears will be the right distance from his nose.

By Roman Genn

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This is why, for example, Border-collie breeders fought tooth and nail against having their dogs recognized by the AKC. From the day they're born, Border-collie puppies herd anything that moves—tennis balls, ducks, humans. Now, science has proven that a great deal of dog behavior is genetic. Pointers, for example, don't necessarily need to be taught to point. (This fact of science is unappealing to liberal dog-lovers; when I made this point in another magazine, dozens of irate readers wrote in to accuse me of being an advocate of eugenics.)

Many Border-collie breeders feared, and fear, that breeding their dogs according to a standard derived solely from appearance instead of behavior could very easily result in dogs that look great but are useless for herding. Border collies remain the unparalleled champions in the burgeoning world of agility trials, contests that measure a dog's intelligence and athletic ability; breeding for looks might attenuate the breed's natural gifts.

But there is a second objection, which even many Westminster breeders will (secretly) endorse: The horrible dogs tend to win. "It's always the dogs with the ribbons in their hair that win," says the breeder of a big floppy hound.

Indeed, since each dog is judged against the standard of its own breed—is the resemblance of Dachshund A to the Platonic ideal of Dachshunds greater than that of Rottweiler B to the über-Rottweiler?—the judging couldn't be more subjective. "It's all politics here," a veteran dog journalist confirms. "The judges don't like hounds."

Indeed, a cursory study of the statistics shows that doggy dogs—the kind of dogs that catch Frisbees, drink out of toilets, or appear in dogs-playing-poker paintings—do not fare well at Westminster. The judges prefer small, malleable, and exotically groomable dogs—the ones that are not only small enough to be carried in a purse, but also behave as if they belonged there. Last year, for example, the runaway winner was a papillon, a homely, twin-pony-tailed dog with a face that looks as if it had been pushed in by a pastry chef's thumb. The dog weighs less than an overripe honeydew and has fewer uses.

One does not want to traffic in stereotypes, but it remains a fact that as one walks from what amounts to the big-dog section to the small-dog section, the number of men practicing alternative lifestyles seems to rise dramatically. Indeed, one gets the sense that for men and women alike, many of these dogs take the place not so much of children, but of Barbie dolls.

Treson, to take a notorious example, is a classic dog-as-dress-up-toy. This legendary "winningest" poodle is shaved down to his death gray skin on legs, rump, and snout. What fur he has is largely in snowball-shaped puffs that look almost glued-on, except above his eyes, where there is a shelf of white hair crowned with a huge white Afro. "Westminster is pretty much a competition among hairdressers," snorts a disapproving veteran.

The assumption permeating Westminster is that these are the best dogs in the world, which prompts the obvious question, "Best for what?" Breeding dogs for their appearance is a relatively recent phenomenon. The original Westminster Dog Shows were contests for gentlemen and their hunting dogs; winning owners received pearl-handled revolvers. It looks as if dog-show culture is on a track parallel to that of the culture as a whole, demonstrating yet again the pertinence of the maxim, "It shouldn't happen to a dog." **NR**

Edited by Richard John Neuhaus

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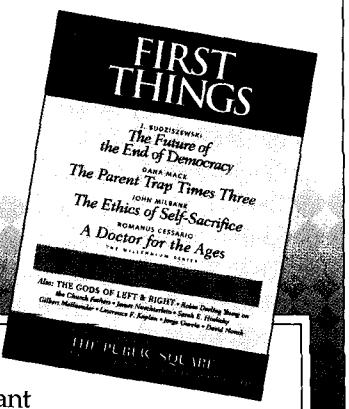
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■ COVER STORY ■

Power Dem

The strange rise of a hatemonger

JAY NORDLINGER

An amazing thing has happened in New York, and in Democratic politics: Al Sharpton has become King. He is Mr. Big, The Man to See, the straw that stirs the drink. Nothing has made that clearer than the prelude to the New York primary, and the budding New York Senate race. They come in a steady parade to him, even if they show flutters of reluctance: Bill Bradley, Al Gore, Hillary Clinton. Everyone refers to this as "kissing his ring"; at times, Democrats seem willing to kiss even more. Not long ago, he was a demagogue, a race-baiter, a menace—and acknowledged as such, by all but a fringe. Day and night, he worked to make an always difficult city—New York—even more difficult, more tense. Now, however, he practically rules. He is a kind of Establishment. His record—as galling as any in our politics—is overlooked, excused, or shrugged off. It is to him that every (Democratic) knee must bow.

And another amazing thing: no penalty. Democratic bigs seem to pay no penalty whatever for their embrace of Sharpton. George W. Bush is worse off for Bob Jones University.

THE KISS OF RESPECT

Sharpton—or "The Rev," as he is known among his fans—is nothing if not mindful of his status; he must know, therefore, that his two visits to the White House last year were milestones for him. One visit was for a conference on police brutality; the other was for a ceremony honoring the New York Yankees ("I don't think Al has ever been to a Yankee game in his life," confided a friend of his to an interviewer). The more Mrs. Clinton becomes a New Yorker, and a New York politician, the friendlier the White House is to Sharpton. Last November, when the First Lady was dithering about whether to run at all, Sharpton announced that his patience was "running thin"; he wondered whether Mrs. Clinton was "too scared and too intimidated and too much of a lackey to challenge" Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, long a Sharpton foe. In due course, Mrs. Clinton declared her candidacy, and made the pilgrimage to Sharpton headquarters.

Bill Bradley needed no prodding. A self-styled Great White Father of black America, he was always eager for Sharpton's blessing, meeting with him early. He was pleased to intone Sharpton's threat-laden slogan, "No justice, no peace." He courted The Rev with breathtaking, unembarrassed ardor. After their get-together in August, Sharpton said to the press, "Mr. Bradley had a very public meeting, answered all of the questions. I think he was very impressive." Outside of Sharpton's offices, however, not everything was harmony. Bill Perkins, a black city councilman, was leaving the meeting when he was confronted by a mob, supportive chiefly of the hate-spewing Khalid Abdul Muhammad, a Sharpton ally. They hurled charges of "Uncle Tom!" and warned that (relatively) temperate politicians like Perkins should "be killed." Such is the atmosphere you enter when you consort with Sharpton, even in his present "mainstream" mode. Bradley is not known to have expressed a word of concern. Out in Iowa, he did say, "I don't agree with Al Sharpton on everything, but I think he has to be given respect." Of course.

Slowest of all to pay homage to Sharpton—but, nevertheless, in time—was Al Gore. Shortly after Mrs. Clinton's visit, Sharpton let it be known that he would not wait for the vice president indefinitely. It would be "strange," he said, if Gore declined to "show respect for the community" (in Sharpton's mind, he and "the community" are one). Within a couple of weeks, Gore did indeed huddle with Sharpton, in the Upper East Side home of Karenna Gore Schiff, his daughter. His staff initially denied that Sharpton was with the Gores, only later admitting the truth. Similarly, Gore managed not to be photographed with The Rev—an example, we may assume, of the famous Gore caution.

Then came the big debate, staged at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem. Sharpton had demanded it. When the Gore camp appeared to hesitate, he snapped, "Clearly, we need a response by the end of the week." Gore, it goes without saying, was delighted to oblige Sharpton. The Man had called, and both Democratic candidates came running. It was a high moment in Sharpton's dizzying career.

New York, you could argue, is in the midst of a broad Sharpton Moment. He is not only at the center of Democratic politics, but key to the very life of the city—orchestrating protests against the police, turning the temperature up or down on racial antagonism, as he wishes, and generally acting like the mayor of black New York. For several years now, there has been a debate over whether there is a "New Sharpton"—a more moderate, less hateful, more constructive one. He is said by his liberal defenders—and occasionally by himself—to have "grown" (a word usually

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There is persistent pressure on Israel, mostly from the Arab states, of course, but also from such good friends as the United States, to bring "sacrifices for peace." It is understood that these "sacrifices"refer to greater "flexibility" in dealing with the Arabs, but mean primarily that Israel should allow its dismemberment, in order to bring peace to the region.

What are the facts?

A Bizarre Concept. The concept to bring "sacrifices for peace" is a new one that has never before found application in world history. It was created by Arab propaganda to induce Israel to agree to its dismemberment, to give strategic assets to those who are determined to destroy it, and to allow such self-destructive events as the creation of a hostile state in its heartland and the division of its capital.

Since its creation in 1948, Israel has been subjected to almost constant Arab terror, to unceasing Arab aggression, and to three major wars. Israel emerged victorious from each of these wars. In the Six-Day War, it recovered its heartland of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem, its capital city, that had been occupied by the Jordanians; it captured the Golan Heights from Syria, which had been used for decades to shell and spread terror over much of northern Israel; and it conquered Gaza and the Sinai Desert that had been used by Egypt as staging ground and invasion route to Israel.

Many Sacrifices for Peace. In order to achieve peace with its neighbors, Israel brought sacrifices for peace that have no precedent in the history of the world. For peace with Egypt, Israel returned the entire Sinai. There is little thanks on the part of Egypt for this generosity and this sacrifice for peace. In the over 20 years since the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel was signed, Egypt has still not established normal channels of cultural and commercial relations with Israel. The controlled Egyptian press spews daily anti-Israel venom. President Mubarak has never visited Jerusalem. It is the coolest possible peace. A sacrifice for peace brought in vain—probably a major act of folly on the part of Israel.

Israel made sacrifices for peace by signing a peace treaty with Jordan. In that peace, Israel granted Jordan a large yearly allowance of fresh water from its own dwindling and meager resources and accepted a petty demand for "border rectification"—yielding of land. That peace is almost as cold as that with Egypt.

As for Syria, no offered sacrifice for peace seems to be sufficient to satisfy its dictator, President Hafez Assad. Nothing will satisfy him and he is unwilling to consider even an ice-cold peace, except on terms of Israel's total surrender of the Golan Heights. Unfortunately for Israel and for the world, the current Israeli government seems to be seriously considering such a "sacrifice for peace".

Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police".

The greatest sacrifice for peace that Israel has brought was the resuscitation of the bankrupt and moribund PLO terror organization and the acceptance of its "chairman" Yasser Arafat as a negotiating partner. In this ill-advised process, foisted on Israel by world pressure and by a previous government, Israel has made far-reaching and existential sacrifices and concessions. It has yielded control of the Gaza Strip and of all major "West Bank" cities to the Palestinian Authority and has agreed to detailed plans to grant further autonomy to the Palestinians. In what is probably the ultimate folly in this process, Israel has tolerated the formation of a Palestinian "police force" (actually an army) of 40,000 men—the largest police-to-population ratio in the world (!)—and has equipped this "police force" with a complete arsenal of automatic weapons. As the world now knows, these weapons were turned on Israeli soldiers and civilians at the very first opportunity that the Palestinian leaders provoked.

The Arab countries, not Israel, are the oppressors in the Middle East; it is they who are killing peace. The PLO, apart from the bloody crimes that it has committed against Israel, has ordered massacres of over 100,000 Lebanese civilians between 1982 and 1990. It has now established a virtual dictatorship in the territory allotted to it—torture and terror are the order of the day. In Egypt, thousands of Copts have been killed and their churches burned. President Assad of Syria has occupied Lebanon and has killed and tortured thousands. Iraq, under its dictator Saddam Hussein, is a rogue state attacking its neighbors and killing its own citizens, including with poison gas. Saudi Arabia is a monarchical tyranny. It prohibits the exercise of any religion except the most orthodox form of Islam. Jews are not allowed in the country. Christians are jailed or worse. Sudan is engaged in the systematic slaughter and enslavement of its black African people. How strange that nobody asks the Palestinians or any of the Arab states to bring any sacrifices at all for peace. Only Israel, an island of peacefulness and civility in that ocean of violence and turmoil, is incessantly being asked to bring such sacrifices. Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police." Billy clubs are good enough for London Bobbies. Why should any more be needed to patrol Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem?

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applied to conservative politicians who migrate left). Bill Bradley, for one, has endorsed this view. Certainly, Sharpton gives appearances of having gone respectable. There he is with Chris Matthews on *Hardball*, talking—and not unreasonably—about "the Moynihan wing" and "the Sharpton wing" of the New York Democratic party. And there he is with Charlie Gibson on *Good Morning America*, sitting next to former mayor David Dinkins. Weird times, these: Dinkins now seems like Sharpton's mascot.

Only rarely is Sharpton held accountable for his offenses. The time may be right, then, for a little walk down Memory Lane.

The problem with the alleged New Sharpton is that he is unsettlingly like the old one. In the tradition of Yasir Arafat, he speaks one way to his core followers on the street, and another to the public at large. If he is not yet a full-blown media darling, he is fast becoming one. Reporters get a kick out of him, finding him exciting, personable, and a joy to quote. As the liberal *New York Post* columnist Jack Newfield has pointed out, he is "dangerous because he is so likable." And only rarely is Sharpton held accountable for his offenses, both past and ongoing. The tendency to forget, or to brush aside, is close to overpowering. The time may be right, then, for a little walk down Memory Lane, as unpleasant as that may be. What manner of man have the brightest lights in the Democratic party come to accept? When they wrap their arms around Al Sharpton, what, really, are they embracing?

A RECORD OF HATE AND PAIN

No one should suppose that Sharpton is without admirable qualities. He has not attracted thousands of followers on charismatic racism alone. He has daring, tenacity, and a gift for leadership, even if repeatedly abused. He is also an American original—a self-created (and re-created) man; a go-getter; an achiever, of sorts. Born 46 years ago in Brooklyn, he was relatively middle class, until his father walked out, when he became poor. He likes to say that he agitated from the beginning: "I yelled when I was hungry. I yelled when I was wet. I yelled when all those little black bourgeois babies stayed dignified and quiet. I learned before I got out of the maternity ward that you've got to holler like hell sometimes to get what you want."

When he was four, according to the legend, he began to preach. Jesse Jackson, who became a mentor, has described him as "a child prodigy." When he was about 14, Sharpton hooked up with one of the many Jackson operations, and at 16 started the first of his own: the National Youth Movement. He was also drawn to Adam Clayton Powell, the colorful and crooked congressman from Harlem. Shortly before he died, in 1972, he had some final words for young Sharpton (in The Rev's telling): "These yellow Uncle Toms are taking over the blacks in New York. Don't you stop fighting. If you want to do something for Adam, get rid of these Uncle Toms." Later, Sharpton came under the wing of James Brown, the soul singer, who acted as a father to him ("James Brown was my father; Jesse Jackson was my teacher"). When he at last took to full-time rabble-rousing, he did so with a ferocity, lashing out at "faggots," "cocktail-sip Negroes," and even black Marxists—those who carried "that German cracker's book under their arms."

He caught a break in 1984, when Bernhard Goetz, the subway gunman and face of white backlash, shot a gang of youthful muggers. Sharpton campaigned for Goetz's head. He caught a further break two years later, when the incident known as "Howard Beach" occurred: A young black man, Michael Griffith, was chased to death by a gang of white thugs. Sharpton was developing a modus operandi: He would call victims or their families—or defendants and theirs—to offer his services, which included cash, legal counsel, and the like. Sharpton himself would serve as "adviser" and "spokesman." He quickly earned the sobriquet "Reverend 911," responding to any black-white emergency. Accused of being an ambulance chaser, he retorted: "No: I am the ambulance."

His greatest infamy came in 1987, with the Tawana Brawley hoax. As the journalist Nat Hentoff has put it, this is Sharpton's "Chappaquiddick." To recall the horrid affair: A girl named Tawana Brawley, after staying away from home for several days, smeared herself with dog feces, scrawled racial epithets on her body, and hopped into a garbage bag. Then she claimed that six white men, including a police officer, had raped and otherwise tormented her. All of America sat up in alarm. Bill Cosby, who was at the height of his fame and popularity, offered a large monetary award for information leading to arrests. And Al Sharpton, of

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With Hillary Clinton

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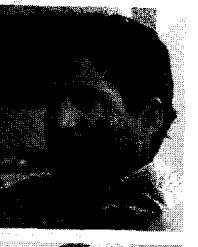

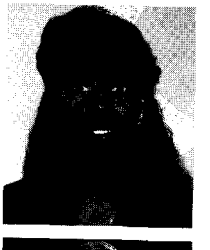

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course, was on the spot. Acting as the Brawley family's adviser, he urged them not to cooperate with the authorities, including the state attorney general, Robert Abrams. To cooperate with Abrams, he said, would be "to sit down with Mr. Hitler." A Sharpton sidekick, Alton Maddox, added, "Robert Abrams, you are no longer going to masturbate looking at Tawana Brawley's picture."

One of those whom Sharpton and his partners accused was an assistant district attorney, Steven Pagones, who was, needless to say, innocent (the crime never took place). After he was cleared, he held a press conference, which Sharpton, in his theatrical fashion, attempted to crash. "Your accuser has arrived!" he bellowed. Sharpton had said before, "We stated openly that Steven Pagones did it. If we're lying, sue us, so we can go into court with you and prove you did it. Sue us—sue us right now." Oddly enough, Pagones did. He spent a decade of his life pursuing a defamation case against Sharpton and his accomplices, finally winning that case one glorious, cleansing day in July of 1998. His life had been a hell—of death threats, illnesses, and assorted other agonies. He said to an interviewer in 1997, "I know that Sharpton doesn't care how I feel. [But] I will follow him and make sure he pays up as long as I live. Wherever he goes, he'll find me waiting for him." Sharpton now owes Pagones $65,000 in damages, money that the victim will probably never see.

At the heart of any case against Sharpton—and against the notion of a New Sharpton—is his persecution of Steven Pagones. It has been, to use the word for which there is no substitute, evil. He has never apologized for his deeds, and nothing piques him more than to be reminded of them. "If I saved the Pope's life," he has sniped, "the media would ask me about Brawley." In soft moments, he has come close to apologizing ("I have regrets"). In harder ones, he is angrily defiant ("Never, ever!"). Liberal journalists—white—patiently explain that, for a black leader, an apology is a complicated matter: a question of politics and tactics, not of right and wrong. As Sharpton himself has said, to apologize would be "all about submission." White folk "are asking me to grovel. They want black children to say that they forced a black man coming out of the hardcore ghetto to his knees." Jesse Jackson gained nothing by apologizing for his "Hymietown" remark, so why should he? Only last year, Sharpton said of his role in the Brawley case, "If I had to do it again, I'd do it in the same way."

There was more, of course—always more. In the spring of 1989, the Central Park "wilding" occurred. That was the monstrous rape and beating of a young white woman, known to most of the world as "the jogger." The hatred heaped on her by Sharpton and his claque is almost impossible to fathom, and wrenching to review. Sharpton insisted—against all evidence—that the attackers were innocent. They were, he said, modern Scottsboro Boys, trapped in "a fit of racial hysteria." Unspeakably, he and his people charged that the victim's own boyfriend had raped and beaten her to the point of death. Outside the courthouse, they chanted, "The boyfriend did it! The boyfriend did it!" They denounced the victim as "Whore!" They screamed her name, over and over (because most publications refused to print it, though several black-owned ones did). Sharpton brought Tawana Brawley to the trial one day, to show her, he said, the difference between white justice and black justice. He arranged for her to meet the jogger's attackers, whom she greeted with comradely warmth. In another of his publicity stunts, he appealed for a psychiatrist to examine the victim. "It doesn't even have to be a black psychiatrist," he said, generously. He added: "We're not endorsing the damage to the girl—if there *was* this damage."

The horrible roll continues. August of 1991 saw "Crown Heights," the period of madness that began when a car driven by a Hasidic Jew careened out of control, killing a seven-year-old black child, Gavin Cato. Riots broke out. A rabbinical student, Yankel Rosenbaum, was lynched. Over a hundred others were injured. The city was on the verge of breaking apart. And here is what Al Sharpton had to say, in one of the most vile orations of his career, noxious with slanders familiar and novel:

> The world will tell us that [Gavin Cato] was killed by accident. . . . What type of city do we have that would allow politics to rise above the blood of innocent babies? . . . Talk about how Oppenheimer in South Africa sends diamonds straight to Tel Aviv and deals with the diamond merchants right here in Crown Heights. . . . All we want to say is what Jesus said: If you offend one of these little ones, you got to pay for it. No compromise. Pay for your deeds. . . . It's no accident that we know we should not be run over. We are the royal family on the planet. We are the original man. We gazed into the stars and wrote astrology. We had a conversation and that became philosophy. . . . We will win because we are right. God is on our side.

Sharpton's rhetoric could also be rather less high-flown. "If the Jews want to get it on," he

Ezio Petersen/UPI

With Bill Bradley

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said, "tell them to pin their yarmulkes back and come over to my house."

HOW NEW?

So: When is the New Sharpton supposed to have emerged? Later in 1991, when, during a march in Brooklyn, he was stabbed in the chest, by a drunken young white. One of those who sped to his bedside was David Dinkins, then mayor, and the symbol of the black establishment that Sharpton despised and would soon replace. "I always tease Mayor Dinkins," he now likes to say, "that I looked up and thought I had died and gone to hell." In a display of magnanimity, Sharpton forgave his assailant and recommended leniency for him in court.

The supposedly sobered Sharpton quickly jumped into the electoral realm, running for the Senate in 1992 against a field he described as "recycled white trash." He finished third out of four Democrats, beating Elizabeth Holtzman, the renowned former congresswoman. Two years later, he again ran for the Senate, taking 26 percent of the vote from the incumbent, Daniel Patrick Moynihan. His most striking political showing came in 1997, when he ran for mayor. He garnered a full 32 percent of the vote in the Democratic primary, almost forcing a runoff with the winner, Ruth Messinger (who went on to be defeated by Giuliani).

All the while, Sharpton's power and influence—the sense of his legitimacy—grew. Once he had referred to Dinkins as "that nigger whore turning tricks in City Hall." By 1993, however, Dinkins could say, "I'm the mayor of New York, but Sharpton is the leader. If we didn't have an Al Sharpton, we would have to create one. Imagine if Al wasn't around. What would have happened to victims? Who would have raised our issues? Thank God for Martin [Luther King], thank God for Adam [Clayton Powell], thank God for Al." The torch had effectively been passed.

But the torching, so to speak, continued. In 1995—four years into the putative New Sharpton—there was another, fatal case in which Sharpton had a guilty hand: Freddy's Fashion Mart. In Harlem, a white store owner—no, worse: a Jewish one—was accused of driving a black store owner out of business. At one of the many rallies meant to scare the Jewish owner away, Sharpton charged that "there is a systemic and methodical strategy to eliminate our people from doing business off 125th Street. I want to make it clear . . . that we will not stand by and allow them to move this brother so that some white interloper can expand his business." Sharpton's colleague, Morris Powell, said of the Jewish owner—Sharpton's "white interloper"—"We're going to see that this cracker suffers. Reverend Sharpton is on it." Three months later, one of the protesters, Roland Smith, stormed Freddy's with a pistol, screaming, "It's on now: All blacks out!" In addition to shooting, he burned the place down. Eight people died.

Sharpton now faced a PR problem, a bump on his road to full respectability. In a manner both Sharptonian and Clintonian, he denied having even spoken at a rally at all. When tapes surfaced, he asked, "What's wrong with denouncing white interlopers?" Eventually, he decided to apologize—but only for saying "white," not "interloper."

SHAME AND HONOR

Most people, it seems—or at least most elites—have made a kind of peace with Sharpton. Two years ago, former mayor Ed Koch appeared on a cooking show with The Rev—just a pair of twinkle-eyed, cuddly New York pols, wearing aprons. But the Old Sharpton never fails to spring back. Around the time he was cooking with Koch, Sharpton was haranguing a Harlem crowd with Khalid Abdul Muhammad, the country's foremost specialist in Hitlerian rhetoric. (Free sample: "Who's pimping the world? The hairy hands of the Zionist in the world.") Pressed slightly on Muhammad, Sharpton said, "I have no problem with Khalid. My problem is Giuliani. It's not Khalid who is talking hate; it's Rudy Giuliani." As far as Sharpton was concerned, Muhammad was "an articulate and courageous brother."

He despises any cold-eyed look at his career. 'They always try to scandalize me,' he complains. They should try harder.

And yet, much of the world is disposed to cut Sharpton miles of slack. With his charm and wit, he is seductive to many, even melting. Every reporter has a personal archive of hilarious and endearing morsels from The Rev's lips. What can they matter, though, in the face of the tremendous harm he has done? Last year, after another American delegation to Havana, Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, a Florida Republican, said, "For the life of me, I just don't know how Castro can seem cute after forty years of torturing people." Sharpton, to be sure, is not Castro; but he has a lot to answer for. Eric Fettmann, an editorial writer and columnist for the *New York Post*, finds Sharpton anything but cute. He is a kind of one-man truth-and-memory squad against Sharpton. The Rev's greatest hoax, he argues, is not Tawana Brawley, but the New Sharpton. The Rev has, in fact, sued the *Post*, for damaging his reputation and inhibiting his fund-raising. The paper—delighted not least by the prospect of a legal proceeding that would open Sharpton's (dubious) books—editorialized, "Bring It On, Rev. Al."

A tragic aspect of Sharpton is that, given his talents, he could be a force for good. When the verdict in last month's Amadou Diallo trial came down, going against Sharpton and his protesters, he said, "Let not one brick be thrown." This was probably the most statesmanlike utterance of his career. But if Sharpton has shed Saul for Paul, he has provided scant evidence of it. Seldom does he resist the demagogic, the hatemongering, temptation. He is, for the most part, proudly unrepentant. And, oh, how he hates any cold-eyed look at his life and times. "They always try to scandalize you," he has complained (echoing an old spiritual). But "they," sadly, do not try to scandalize him enough. Perhaps even worse, they do nothing to scandalize those top Democrats who have bent to Sharpton's feet, raising him higher than ever. **NR**

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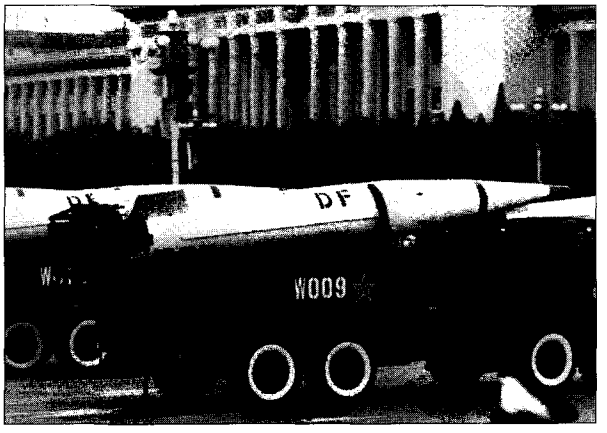
East Wind

The threat that blows from China

MARK HELPRIN

CHINA calls each new edition of its most potent intercontinental ballistic missile *East Wind*. This lovely and suggestive name begs an assessment of China's capabilities and intentions, because it appears to contradict what China tells us of itself and what is most reassuring for us to believe.

By geography, history, and tradition, China has been remarkably self-contained. It seems to have an artificial horizon that allows it to be content within its own sphere and to internalize its upheavals rather than export them. It rejects what it calls "power politics," and shuns alliances. Of the almost 2.5 million soldiers of the world's largest army, it has detailed only 32 for international peacekeeping duties, fewer than provided by Estonia. After going to war in Korea, India, and Vietnam, it simply withdrew, as if it found existence beyond its borders painful.



The East Wind *missile*

The historical pattern of Chinese stasis and Confucian self-restraint is repeatedly cited by China as evidence that its foreign policy is neither interventionist nor expansionary. But as China's thinly veiled nuclear threat against the United States shows—as do its wars or objectives in Korea, Vietnam, Tibet, Taiwan, the Senkaku Islands, the Spratlys and Paracels, India, Laos, Burma, Kashmir, on the Amur, and in various Third World clients—even if this is mainly true, it is not entirely true. And even if it is mainly true, China may yet depart from its traditional course.

PATTERNS THROUGH TIME

Certainly historical precedent is not without examples for it to emulate. In the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., the Tang Dynasty expanded northward and westward almost to the Aral Sea, 1,000 miles beyond China's present borders. When the Mongols intermixed with and ruled the Chinese as the Yuan Dynasty, Peking was the seat of an empire that stretched from the Pacific to the Danube, from the Amur to the Euphrates, from Moscow to the Arabian Sea. This very same dynasty also controlled Korea and Vietnam, and sent two naval expeditions to conquer Japan. The borders against which China has in recent times pressed with unmistakable ardor, during a period of weakness, are the gateways to those regions over which, during a period of strength, the Yuan Dynasty once ruled.

The striking precedent of the Yuan Dynasty may be weakened by its Mongol origin and its remoteness in time, but it is a leading example of a nation in ascension. Greeks, Romans, Muslims, Mongols, Russians, British, and numerous others have possessed what the Arabic historian Ibn Khaldun called *'asabiya*, a sense of group solidarity, unity of purpose, and esprit de corps: in short, the momentum of destiny, when a whole people comes alight with success. China is reaching for this.

And ours is the perfect era for it to abandon its predilection for looking inward, in that science, technology, and trade—the international currencies of power—will inevitably pull from isolation even those countries that are most deeply entrenched. China has modeled itself, either consciously or by extraordinary and meaningful coincidence, on Japan, another isolated, inward-looking Asian country that, shocked and humiliated by the West, programmatically set out to appropriate the skills of those who had bested it, and succeeded.

British and American bombardment impelled the Japanese to tame their warlords, do away with feudalism, restore central power, and begin to study the ways of the West with a vengeance. China—not long ago just as feudal, divided, conquered, and backward—has done exactly this. After the restoration of the Meiji emperor in 1868, the Japanese sought national unity, industrialization, and military strength, recognizing that they would proceed in that order. Their slogan was *fukoku kyohei*, "rich country, strong arms." Predominantly agricultural Japan was able after only a third of a century to marshal warships, built in European yards, to defeat a second-class European power (Russia), and then after another third of a century to come close to defeating the world's leading naval power (this time with a battle fleet built in Japanese yards), because, to quote the cardinal sentence in G. B. Sansom's *The Western World and Japan*, "The greater part of her early industrial effort was put into production of goods of direct or indirect strategic importance." Japanese students, officials, and businessmen methodically collected information in the West or from Westerners in Japan, and, although the Japanese imitated every aspect of Western culture, their characteristically disciplined focus was on industry and the military.

For China, the stress of occupation and war continued on during the catastrophic Great Leap Forward, the Sino–Soviet split, and the Cultural Revolution. Only in the Seventies did the sky clear enough for it to envision and begin military-industrial modernization, encouraged by its assessment that war was not imminent with either the Soviet Union or the

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United States, and that China would therefore be allowed a long strategic pause in which to prepare. In 1978, during the Third Plenum of the 11th Party Congress, Deng Xiaoping consolidated his authority and established what came to be known as the *16-Character Policy*: "Combine the military and the civil; combine peace and war; give priority to military products; let the civil support the military." Like the Meiji *fukoku kyohei*, this represents a profound understanding of the relation of military to economic power.

In the United States, the direction of policy is determined by the continuous battle of two major parties, each further subdivided. Whereas the object of our politics is not unanimity, in China the measure of success is the extent to which a single voice is taken up by all. After Deng Xiaoping proffered the *16-Character Policy*, every center of power amplified and elaborated upon its principles in what became an extremely reliable description of China's course, a description that has been verified over the last two decades by the precise conformity of action and declaration.

As described by General Zhao Nanqi, former president of the Academy of Military Science, "The essence of the change was to make full use of the period of relative peace without major wars and to pay close attention to making plans for our modernization drive." A review of the relevant literature, cross-checked with reference to expressed and executed military, economic, and social policy, makes clear that China understands that wars are won by preparing the entire culture, reforming it if necessary. China understands that the source of its modernization and empowerment will initially be the West, from which it must take what it needs. It understands and anticipates a lag time of 50 to 75 years, or more, and it is patient. It knows that the West is far ahead of it, but that as the West slows and China picks up its pace, the West can be caught. It is approaching this with the purposeful concentration of the Meiji and the angry resolve of Germany between the wars. Its task is to win the next war, whenever that may be, and its determination is not to be dismissed.

A NATION GEARS UP

These are China's aims, but what of its potential? With both political and analytical brilliance, Deng Xiaoping was able to redirect China's energies according to the single principle that its strategic power depends upon its per capita GNP. It may seem obvious that the wealthier a country is, the more it can devote to its military, but understanding the particulars of this proposition is necessary for making a decent guess about what China may be able to do and when. What follows in the next few paragraphs is expressed in the number-laden language for which, in more enlightened countries, various academics are justly condemned to death. It is, however, the heart of the argument, and if we do not master these numbers, they will master us.

In a hypothetical country with a population of 100 million and a GNP of $10 billion, even one dollar for defense subtracted from each person's lot would mean four days in which he would not eat. But in the same country with a GNP of $100 billion, the government could extract, for example, $400 from each person (40 percent of GNP, as in the U.S. during WW II), who would still be living a full six times better than in his recent memory. The difference is vast, being that between a defense budget of $100 million and a discontented population, and a defense budget of $40 billion and a population richer than it ever imagined. This is impressive enough, but what is truly startling and cautionary in the example is that a tenfold increase in GNP has been transformed into a *400-fold* increase in defense expenditure—because of a most extraordinary relation that escapes most observers as they keep in mind two variables rather than three, the third being per capita income, which defines the margin of extraction.

A very big country with a sudden and previously unexperienced margin of abundance would have many closed avenues opened to it. That Israel, with only a few million people, was able to prevail against enemies with, initially, many times its GNP, is attributable not least to the fact that Israel's per capita GNP quickly surpassed those of its competitors. Now it is 16 times Egypt's, or, in purchasing power parity (PPP), 4.5 times. (For countries with well developed domestic arms industries—China, Israel—PPP is more accurate than the absolute measure, because for these countries hard currency is not required for military acquisition.) In 1950, Egypt's GNP was 4.5 times Israel's. The subsequent reversal was due to Israel's rate of economic growth, which from Israel's founding to shortly before the Six Day War averaged 11 percent per annum, the highest in the world. Israel's spectacular victory over its combined opponents in June of 1967 was foreshadowed by this, but at the time only a few analysts fully understood the connection.

Although recently growth has slowed, for the past two decades China has had among the highest rates of economic growth and capital reinvestment in the world, which is all the more significant given China's size. In the twelve years from 1986 through 1998, China tripled its GNP and doubled its absolute per capita GNP. It doubled its PPP per capita GNP in just the six years prior to 1998. At first glance one might think that it has used this great increase in margin to advance defense outlays concomitantly, in that these have increased from $5.8 billion in 1986 to $37.5 billion in 1998. But it hasn't. Adjusting for population increase, China's 1998 GNP was more than its 1986 GNP by $400 billion, from which, in keeping with the exhortations of the *16-Character Policy*, it might have been perfectly reasonable to extract a military bite not of $37.5 billion but of $100 billion or more. Why have military outlays increased by a factor of six rather than of 16? For three reasons. First, in the rush of getting to where it is, China has become somewhat less stable and finds it necessary to buy social peace with a larger civilian share of GNP than might otherwise have been desirable. Second, China's expressed time frame for catching the West is 50 to 75 years, and capital investment is a far more efficient use of resources than the immediate diversion of them. Third, China's military echelons and industries are in a period of reformation and development, able to make use only of what their current organization and methods of operation allow them to absorb.

The still tremendous increase in military spending has been devoted to both the replacement of outdated armaments and the more professional training of smaller forces. In a "military market basket" of ICBM-or-equivalent delivery vehicles, major surface combatants, submarines, tanks, and combat aircraft, China has seen during its period of extraordinary growth

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a reduction of 22 percent (excluding the nuclear component, which has grown by 560 percent). If it holds military outlays to between 5 percent and 6 percent of GNP and the GNP continues its strong growth, the reductions will slowly stabilize and reverse. This is undoubtedly the scenario from which Western governments develop their estimates. But for China merely to continue along such a line would be a departure from the carefully formulated, widely propagated plan that it has been following for almost a generation. After the cadres have been professionalized and their weapons improved at a comfortable pace, and when the military industries have been adequately primed, China will find itself at a new juncture, probably sometime between 2015 and 2030.

■

China's first steps are more or less accomplished, the consequence of its mass, its position, and the social transformation of the West.

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If at that moment social stability need not be bought, or if the economy is strong enough for more butter *and* more guns, GNP will be diverted from civilian consumption and capital reinvestment to military expansion. Neither minor nor short lived, such a diversion will mean an immense surge in military spending and preparation, after which Western politicians will express their utter shock, and the press will declare enough times to convince itself absolutely that no reputable analyst could have foreseen or did foresee such a thing. Even then, it will not occur to the politicians or the press, as they pass helplessly from denial to hysteria, that during the previous years the Chinese mantra of stability so contemptuously derided in the West was not merely attributable to deep fear of the anarchy and dissolution that has so tried China during its long history, but was, rather, a grave effort to shield the *16-Character Policy* in its early and vulnerable stages. This is undoubtedly for the Chinese leadership, as it moves through China's traditional perils, a matter of some drama and import, as it should be for us as well.

WHAT CHINA CAN DO

Assuming that China neither stagnates, disintegrates, nor sees its perspective altered by its achievements, it may soon be rich in options that we find worrisome. In PPP, its 1998 GNP was more than $4 trillion. Because it has independent military industries, apportioning 10 percent of GNP to defense (as did a dozen of the world's countries in 1998) would have resulted in a PPP-equivalent defense budget greater than that of the United States, at a cost only of reducing PPP per capita GNP (in addition to the current 5 percent already debited for defense) from $3,500 to $3,300. Even without adjustment for PPP, a 10 percent apportionment would have yielded a defense budget, taking into account differences in manpower costs, approaching half that of the United States. Note that these examples are based only on 1998 figures, while China, according to its own affirmations, intends to hold fire for a decade or two, when much higher numbers could be derived from a swollen national output.

But they are only numbers. Even were China to realize its capacities, what could it do with its newfound power? Attendant to the flawed notion that China is bound by history to non-expansion is the impression that it has nowhere to go, being confined by the Himalayan, Karakorum, and Pamir mountains to the west; Siberia, leading north to nothing; Southeast Asia, an inverted triangle disappearing into the sea; and, to the east, the Pacific. Upon closer inspection, however, China's confines appear less than absolute.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimates that world petroleum use will double by 2030, with Middle Eastern supply of world demand peaking at approximately 55 percent between 2012 and 2020 (coincident with the Chinese surge that I project). Thus it is significant that, whereas the naval port of Zhanjiang is 4,800 miles from Abu Dhabi, Norfolk is 8,200 miles via Suez and, in view of Chinese relations with states along the Red Sea, 11,600 miles via the Cape of Good Hope. (The oil embargo that began in 1973 was successful not because of sudden Arab resolution but due to the effect of shuttling Persian Gulf tankers that great distance around the blocked Suez Canal.) Given the possibility that an advance upon contiguous Central Asian energy reserves might be for China not that much more daunting than its inhalation of Tibet, much opportunity exists here for what the Chinese call power politics, especially were China, like most developing nations, to shift from coal to oil.

Without using neutron bombs on swarms of short-range missiles, both of which it possesses and is augmenting, China has neither the amphibious capacity nor the air power to take Taiwan. But with a capitulationist, disengaged, or weakened United States, this would require only assiduous planning, moderate sacrifice, and medium economic growth. Beyond that, and possibly in the flush of unification, the domination of Japan cannot be ruled out as a future Chinese aim born not of ambition but of the cascade of events. A Chinese invasion of Taiwan would almost certainly stimulate Japanese rearmament, which would require of China the "active defense" that would (in the formulation of the Chinese Air Force) "teach a lesson and severely punish anyone who is threatening China's peace and security." China often proclaims peaceful intentions but simultaneously declares an extremely low threshold of preemption. Action against Japan before it has rearmed and while circumstances favor China, though perhaps unlikely, is the kind of unexpected tragedy that litters history.

With comparatively little effort, China can seal its obvious advantages in regard to a war on the Asian mainland. Its first steps are more or less accomplished, the consequence of its mass, its position, and the social transformation of the West. What American president in our time would go to full-scale non-nuclear war on the mainland of Asia, and what for? Truman, Eisenhower, and Johnson opted out when the U.S. possessed absolute nuclear superiority and different civilian and military cultures. Domination of the East Asian landmass is for China more or less assured.

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Why then does it pour so much capital and energy into a full-blown nuclear-weapons program with the object of deploying MIRVed ICBMs on mobile launchers rolling around its great interior deserts, or in nuclear submarines cruising within protected maritime bastions? Clearly, its aim is to neutralize American nuclear superiority, or—as Maj. Gen. Yang Huan, formerly of the Strategic Rocket Forces, elegantly expresses it—to "smash nuclear blackmail." MacArthur advocated and, later, Eisenhower considered the use of nuclear weapons against China, but nothing followed. Vietnam was a decade-long illustration of American nuclear restraint. China knows both that tactical nuclear weapons, having been all but banished from American doctrine, are not the easy route to escalation they once were, and that North Korean chemical and biological warfare programs make the tactical use of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula unlikely. But China sees the urgency of neutralizing American nuclear power (which, with an invulnerable counterforce, it can). Why? To remove the nuclear dimension of localized warfare, freeing conventional means (in which China can more easily secure an on-scene advantage) to work without inhibition. As it becomes a great power, China envisions what has always been natural for a great power: the unchallenged dominance of its region of the world. Were China, as current American policy baselessly assumes, to lack such ambitions, it would be the first great power in history, including the United States, to do so.

CLINTON: THE FACE OF APPEASEMENT AND SELF-DELUSION

At first blush the China policy of the Clinton administration might appear to be part of the second ideological childhood of so many of its putative foreign-policy experts: that is, a recapitulation of their conduct during the Cold War and of the idea that national security is a rightist will-o'-the-wisp for pumping up the arms business and holding on to power; that, quite apart from the fact that American interests are indefensible, the belief that they can be endangered is simply the paranoia engendered by inexplicable hostility to Socialism. Accordingly, the institutions of national security are important only in that they cry out to be miniaturized. This uncultivated view is the ideal complement to the American people's fatigue with the wars of the 20th century, its desire for a millennial transformation of history, the lingering shock of twice coming up roughly against China (in Korea and Vietnam), and the accurate feeling that to face the new China would be costly and dangerous. Thus, the administration "pushes" for a peanut-sized strategic defense, starves and demoralizes the armed forces, abandons export controls, and at every turn shows China the face of appeasement and self-delusion.

But here ideology is just a cover, for the real nature of American-Chinese relations is transactional. The famous description of the White House as a turnstile only serves the Clinton defense that access (which is what you get when you pass through a turnstile) is by its nature innocuous. Turnstiles are, after all, part and parcel of American politics. A more

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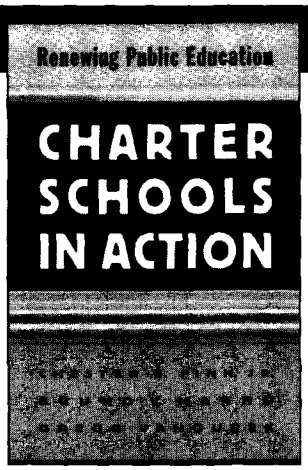

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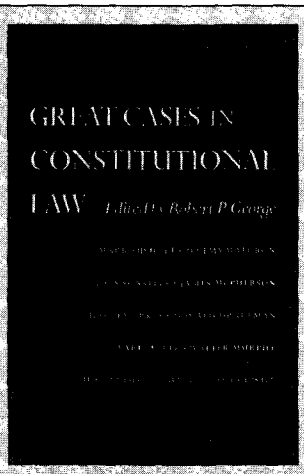

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precise analogy would be to a store. In a store you pay money for something you can take home. That is the essence of the Clinton China policy.

Like his Meiji counterparts, Deng Xiaoping understood that the tools he wanted would have to be bought, borrowed, or stolen. Even before the *16-Character Policy*, the father of China's ballistic-missile program—Lt. Gen. Qian Xuesen, M.A., M.I.T.; Ph.D., Cal Tech; Col., U.S. Army Air Force—left the U.S. in 1955 with four of his associates on the Titan Missile design team. This was the hors d'œuvre. Now the expropriations were to be accomplished in earnest, according to the principles of "people's war," in which, just as guerrilla warfare can complement or supplant conventional military operations, massive numbers of intelligence gatherers from all segments of society work alongside but usually independently of professionals. Three thousand Chinese-government front corporations now operate in the United States, among them, according to the Cox Committee, "corporations set up outside the PRC by organs of the PRC government to funnel money to key U.S. leaders," and many others with links to the army and arms ministries. In 1996 alone, 80,000 Chinese citizens in 23,000 delegations visited the U.S. Despite case after case of theft and espionage, their access to defense contractors and the national laboratories is uncontrolled. Money men like Charlie Trie and James Riady provide serendipitous access, in their case to an ambitious southern governor whose obscure early contacts began to clarify once he moved into the White House.

Though the net of go-betweens, bagmen, monks, nuns, and mules was exceedingly complex, it did not successfully cover the fact that the president and his party solicited and received millions of dollars in political contributions and other moneys (such as witness payoffs) from sources allied to, controlled, or funded by the Chinese government. For example, Col. Liu Chaoying (daughter of the vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission) and Ji Shengde, head of Chinese military intelligence, met with Johnny Chung in Hong Kong in the summer of 1996, giving him $300,000 that led to a meeting of Col. Liu and the president. Wang Jun (son of the late President Wang Zhen), an arms dealer, contributed $600,000 via Charlie Trie, and met with the president in the White House. One Mr. Wu, closely connected with the People's Liberation Army and Macao organized crime, funneled at least a quarter of a million dollars to the DNC through Charlie Trie, the president's friend from Little Rock. There were literally dozens of others with ties to China, its military, North Korea, and Chinese ministries and industries with interests in American technology. Each had money to contribute, and the thorough and energetic Mr. Clinton seems to have met every single one. They were armed not only with well laundered bank accounts but also, reportedly, with suitcases full of cash. Because of this, and because more than a hundred witnesses took the Fifth or fled, and because the White House and Justice Department have won the Olympic gold medal in *omertà*, what is known is obviously only the detritus that has floated up from a much greater, submerged enterprise that with complete impunity has corrupted the President of the United States and his closest associates.

While benefiting from these illicit contributions, the president himself took the initiative to end export controls under COCOM; to move the remaining authority over exports (despite protests from State and Defense) to the Department of Commerce, which in 1997 and 1998 allowed 6,539 out of 6,565 classification requests to pass without referring them to the expert agencies; to lift sanctions on China so as to allow the launch of American satellites even after it became clear that the work of Hughes and Loral aided China in the development of new missile types; to liberalize controls on supercomputers so that China, which had no such thing in 1996, had 600 by 1998; and to appoint John Huang, a money shepherd and operative of the Riadys (who themselves are partners of China Resources, an "agent of espionage, economic, military, and political," according to reliable sources) to be principal deputy assistant secretary of commerce for international economic policy. While he was reviewing intelligence documents and placed in a key position bearing on the release of military technology, John Huang met secretly with Chinese officials in Washington nine times, six times in the Chinese embassy.

China has walked away with a great deal of what it needs to implement the *16-Character Policy*: guidance, MIRV, busing, fairing, and failure-analysis technology for missile design and testing; highly classified antisubmarine warfare techniques; night-vision technology; machine tools necessary for military production beyond the ken of Chinese manufacture; plans for every nuclear warhead in the U.S. inventory; nuclear legacy codes; and high-capacity computers. China is a signatory of the nuclear test ban treaty, and would be hindered in its pursuit of the miniaturized warheads it needs to neutralize American nuclear predominance if it were not able to simulate testing with supercomputers. With the legacy codes, warhead plans, and computers of 10,000 MTOPS (millions of theoretical operations per second), it can carry out its programs. The faster the computers, the faster it can work to customize what it needs. In 1998, two 10,000 MTOPS computers were released to China by special waiver. In February of 2000, the president proposed to end licensing requirements in sales to China for "civilian" use of computers up to 20,000 MTOPS: "Combine the military and the civil; combine peace and war; give priority to military products; let the civil support the military."

China now has 40 ICBMs and is developing at least two more classes. Given that deployed ICBMs have increased by 560 percent since 1987, it seems reasonable to estimate that, with additional silo-based ICBMs and the new mobile and SLBM classes, China may possess 200 or more a decade from now. It now has the information and computer power needed to replicate the kind of American warhead that can ride 14 to a missile. Ten years on, when the U.S. may have reduced the number of its warheads to between two and three thousand, China may well have MIRVed its ICBMs and have achieved nuclear parity numerically, if not by other measures as well. That is indeed a lot to walk away with, but it is not as important as the singular fact that by its intervention in American politics China has twice helped to secure the election of an administration opposed to ballistic-missile defense and committed to reduce the U.S. military to what are in many respects subcritical levels.

Is it not astounding that all of this has gone unchecked, that the press, the Congress, and the people have failed to restore to proper order the most elementary matters of law, precedence, and national self-preservation? Every decision

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Happy Valentine's Day . . . For Whom?

By Valentine's Day, America will have more than 2 million of its citizens behind bars.

- **America, with less than 5% of the world population, has a quarter of the world's prisoners.**
- **There are six times as many Americans behind bars as are imprisoned in the 12 countries that make up the entire European Union, even though those countries have 100 million more citizens than the US.**
- **Our jails and prisons have literally become the 51st state, with a greater combined population than Alaska, North Dakota and South Dakota.**
- **Two-thirds of the inmates in America's prisons and jails — over 1.2 million prisoners — are locked up for non-violent offenses. Since 1980, the number of non-violent prisoners has tripled and the number of drug prisoners has increased seven fold.**

Source: Justice Policy Institute, "The Punishing Decade: Prison and Jail Estimates at the Millennium," December 8, 1999.

Is the Drug War Turning the United States Into a Police State?

For more information visit: http://www.csdp.org.
Common Sense for Drug Policy, Kevin B. Zeese, President
703-354-9050, 703-354-5695 (fax), info@csdp.org

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regarding China, the president and his supporters will affirm, was made solely in the best interests of the United States. This is not the most brazen lie in American history. William Marcy Tweed's county courthouse cost twice what the United States paid for Alaska, including $41,190.95, in 1869, for what Tweed and his supporters affirmed were, "Brooms, etc."

WHAT TO DO

The Clinton presidency is coming to an end, leaving in place of a China policy only years of advertisement that Americans think small, are afraid, and can be bought. Presumably China has extensive knowledge of certain lapses, which might constrain a President Gore from adopting a new China policy even if he wanted to. That is what happens when the monkey puts his hand in the coconut and closes his fist. But, no matter: Despite delay, it is never too late for a sound U.S. policy, especially when it fills a vacuum.

That policy must be founded on the historical truth that empires in ascension share the common characteristic that they will expand only into a relatively empty and demoralized space. In the late 19th century, the British were masters of a quarter of the earth's surface. In this great area almost 400 million people were subject to British rule, and yet the entire expanse was garrisoned by only 125,000 British troops. Following the pattern of Cortez, who conquered Mexico with 600 Spaniards, and Pizarro, who subdued the Inca Empire with 183, light-occupation forces held down whole continents—but only until they met determined opposition, and then they were gone. Empires are not inevitable. They will not arise if they are resisted, and resistance is a matter of timing: The earlier it begins, the earlier and more easily imperial momentum is broken.

The effectiveness of resistance is shaped more by its character than by its mass, and fundamental to its character is its justification. The United States must counter Chinese domination of Asia to keep the balance of geostrategic power and for the sake of our economic relations and free access to the famously interdependent world economy. But we have a far more important duty. The world is full of unnecessary suffering and death. Other than God's, no compassion is deep enough to allay it. If, however, something existed that could allay it, it would be worth fighting for. Such a thing does exist. It is a weapon against human misery far more powerful than compassion or revolution. Proven and validated as it moves through history, it is the chief and outstanding principle to which the Founders were devoted and for which we have fought, justly, in war after war. The theme of American history, of Western Civilization, it has become a universal standard. It is, simply, that government shall derive its just powers from the consent of the governed. Our longstanding allies on China's seaward rim have come hard to this principle, and to abandon them other than by duress would be to abandon the principle itself.

The hope of the world is that as China advances it will move peacefully toward this standard. Until then, standing firm in the Western Pacific is fully consistent with the underpinnings and traditions of this civilization. And if it is the principle of self-government that becomes once again the point of contention between East and West, so be it. We would not be imposing this principle on China, but, rather, protecting the free and viable democracies that have chosen to live by it. China's claim to Taiwan, for example, where only 14 percent of the inhabitants are mainland Chinese, is no more legitimate than would have been an American claim to Canada in 1825 because American Tories had fled there in the years after our independence. We may have accepted the idea of one China, but we have never agreed to unification by force.

Whatever China's power and prospects, affording protection to those in its shadow is entirely feasible for the United States if it exploits its strengths. With a population one-fifth the size of China's and ten times the GNP, the U.S. can outpace China discouragingly at any rate it chooses, just as it did the Soviet Union. It is one thing for China to race an opponent that is slowing, but it would be another to compete with one that does not flag, and quite another to race against a United States that effortlessly pulls away. This the U.S. can effect at little cost. Were it not trumpeted by Richard Gephardt as the rape of the Sabine women, raising the percentage of GNP allocated to defense from 3.2 to 4.2, one point short of the 30-year average, would go unnoticed in this country but leave China behind with each passing year by two full years of its current outlays.

■

It is one thing for China to race an opponent that is slowing, and quite another to race against a United States that effortlessly pulls away.

■

A painless step worth far more than a point of GNP would be to shut down the major sources of China's defense research simply by instituting reasonable security and counterespionage practices and placing commonsensical controls on exports. And must we continue to serve China's strategic interests by transforming the United States Army into a faddishly light gendarmerie? What might China, not to mention North Korea, think about the careless assumption of our somnolent planners less than a decade after the Gulf War, perhaps the largest single battle in history, that the combat of massive formations will never again occur? Another military reform that would discourage China and others would be to remove our mothers, wives, and daughters from combat. Traditional cultures are not only appalled by this kind of experimentation, they see it as one of the signs that we are undergoing a crisis of will, and they are right.

And then there is Russia. America's triumphalist, dismissive, and careless approach to Moscow is that much more foolish in light of Russia's potential combination with China, the prevention of which should be a major objective of our diplomacy. Russia will arm China only according to its own interests, but how it calculates or miscalculates those interests may change the face of history. Nonetheless, in all respects, Korea, where we face the possibility of large-scale combat on the ground, is the most vulnerable point. For the long term, the best course is to await unification and, when it is achieved, withdraw. Until

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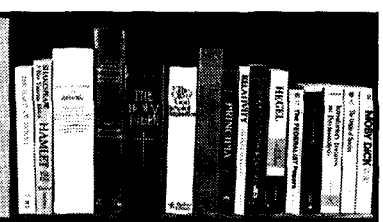
that time, we may be capable of defending the South even from a Chinese onslaught, *if we reconstitute our forces*, and as long as we recognize that we may once again be compelled to run up and down the peninsula. If China wants to shock and dislocate the United States, it will attack in Korea, but, then again, if it does it will wake the real giant, which is us.

We want and can have good relations with China, including (upon the satisfaction of certain conditions) a robust non-strategic trade, but China has been most aggressive in mounting an espionage offensive against us and in its interference in our domestic politics. This requires a response. Apart from merely putting it on notice not to take the Clinton years as gospel, we should firmly set about doing the two things China finds most frustrating—building a strategic defense and increasing military cooperation with Taiwan. (We have already embarked upon the latter, although President Clinton, not surprisingly, promises to veto the legislation that establishes it.) Neither of these is a violation of any agreement we have with China, and both will clarify and check its unwarranted initiatives. One cannot be afraid to provoke where required, but one must also be reluctant to do so while uncertain of a rival's plan or if it may be transformed, lest a cycle of provocation and reaction lead to a war no one wants.

Here fate has been generous to the democracies, for Japan, Taiwan, and Australasia are islands. This incontrovertible fact is to us what the gift of the English Channel was to Britain in the world wars. Navies can exist, radiant in force across the seas, and yet remain neither threatening nor overbearing. Two-thirds of the earth's surface, the sea is the supreme theater of geostrategic maneuver, as the British Empire and the world wars attest. It comes naturally to Americans to dominate the sea, deploying the world's most complex machines in an austere, spatially abstract arena of lots of distance and little nuance. If China is to be the great challenge of the 21st century, the United States must at least double the strength of its navy. Taiwan could be protected for a decade with no more than the number of attack submarines President Clinton will have scrapped in his two terms. These, and fresh squadrons of surface combatants, with half a dozen new carrier battle groups, and coordinated augmentations of the ground-based fighter inventory, the army, and the military establishment in train, would obviate Japanese rearmament, and are the best chance for discouraging China from a course in which military development is paramount. Naturally, the president and his limpets would recoil at the very mention of this, but that is because, as their conduct shows, they do not understand that to refuse to maintain the balance of power in Asia is to beg for war.

What of that conduct? It has been capitulationist by action and by default. It has been cowardly, craven, and venal. The presidency of the United States was put up for sale and the presidency of the United States was bought. This in conjunction with the rise of what China metaphorically calls the east wind. Things can change, however, if America is roused, as has happened many times before. It is true that the east wind may rise, but the wind can also rise in the west. **NR**

SUMMER GREAT BOOKS PROGRAM
FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
July 30 - August 11, 2000



Designed for students who have completed at least three years of high school, this program offers an opportunity to exercise the mind, the spirit and the body. The classes will be conducted, as all classes at Thomas Aquinas College, using the Socratic method of discussion. These will be guided by full-time faculty of the College, with no more than fifteen students.

The two week course includes Sophocles' *Antigone*, the *Crito* of Plato, the *Declaration of Independence*, and readings from *Genesis*, Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, Shakespeare, Euclid, Pascal, C.S. Lewis and more.

Mass will be celebrated daily, and at least one chaplain will be available on campus at all times.

Intense thinking should be tempered with rest and play, and the location of the College is ideal for recreation of all sorts. Besides daily sports, an occasional movie, and hiking in the hills surrounding the campus, there will be trips to such places as Los Angeles to attend a concert or visit a museum, and to Santa Barbara to enjoy the beach and the historical sites of the city.

The $700 cost includes housing, meals, books and organized activities off campus.

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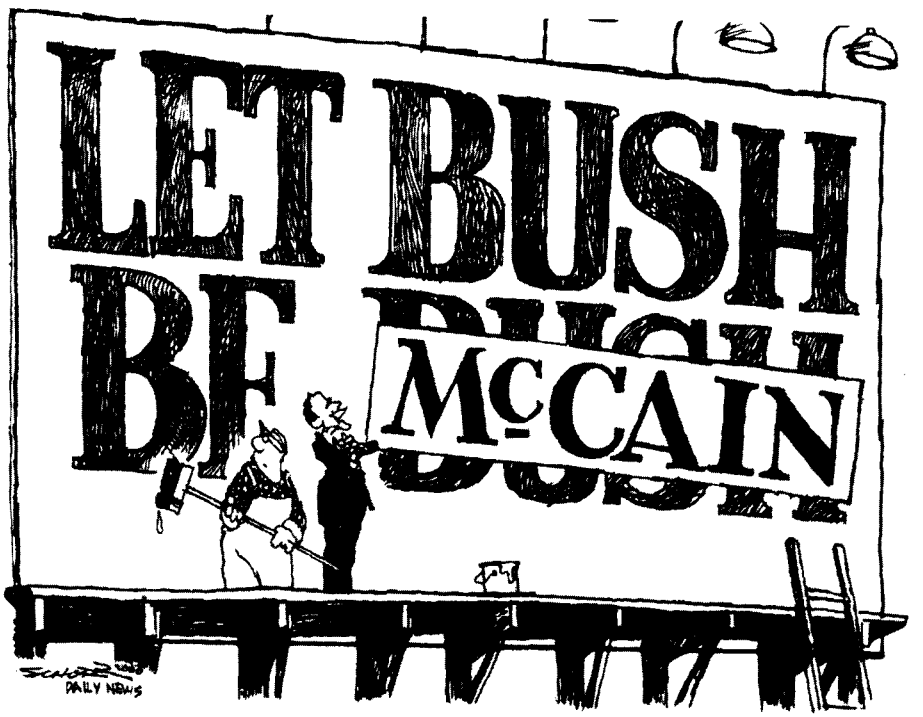
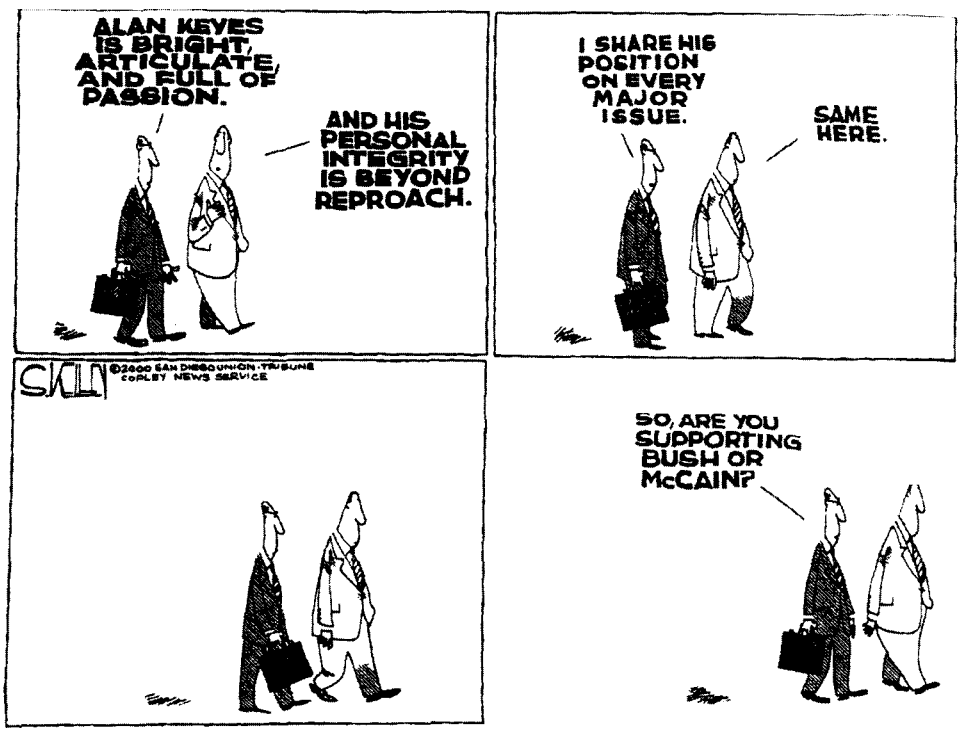


"WORKS FOR ME..."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I SHARE HIS POSITION ON EVERY MAJOR ISSUE.
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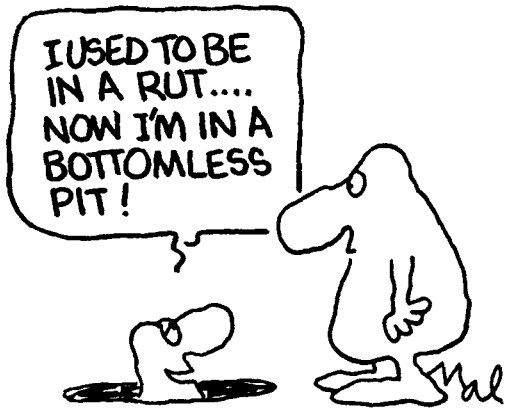

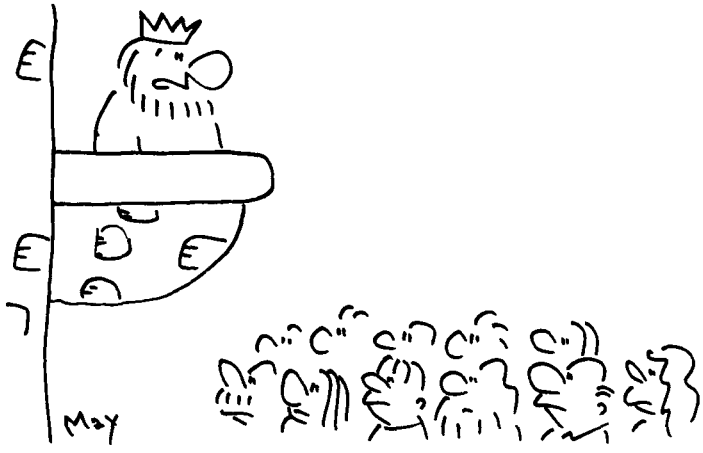

"Sorry about the war and the recession and the police brutality and all, but I did it for the children."

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Dear Mr. Bush:

Our several recent attempts to contact you have been unsuccessful.

YOUR ACCOUNT IS NOW SERIOUSLY PAST DUE.

The American Express card is a charge card, not a credit card. Monthly charges are due when billed. Your current outstanding balance of $76,983.31 must be paid IMMEDIATELY. Failure to do so will result in revocation of charge privileges.

Our records indicate that a substantial portion of your outstanding balance went to one vendor, PushPollAmerica, and for jet fuel. Our records indicate that you have attempted to transfer these items to your Sign 'n' Travel account. Therefore, in future, your jet fuel expenses will be transferred to this account. The current charges stay current, however.

You will not accrue Membership Miles until the outstanding balance is paid.

Sincerely,

DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS DEPARTMENT

Dear Mr. Gore:

The Patent Office is in receipt of your letter dated February 17, 2000.

We have carefully examined your extensive and detailed designs for what you call the "Let Al Gore Save Your Child Device."

Patents are essentially legal claims. They represent ownership of an original idea, and are issued by this office to enable the patent owner to collect fees and royalties based on his or her design.

Your device—a hard plastic cradle with straps and safety buckles—bears a strong resemblance to several other items on the market, called "child car seats" or "safety seats." The model you submitted, in fact, is one such device, with the plastic lettering "Peg Perego" scratched off and "Let Al Gore Save Your Child" scrawled over in indelible marker.

It is impossible for this office to issue a patent on an existing device. We thought we had made this clear when you submitted plans for your "Al Gore Artificial Kidney" dialysis device, which we discovered was a well-known model of such a device with the label scratched off and your face pasted on the centrifuge mechanism.

Request for patent denied.

Sincerely,

PATENT OFFICE CLAIMS

P.S.: In re: your other patent request, we are almost certain that Dr. Jonas Salk predates your "Gore Vaccine" by several decades.

Dear Mr. McCain:

CONGRATULATIONS! You have been PRE-APPROVED for a PLATINUM PLUS VISA card!

Because of your unique stature, and your proven ability to pay, you have been PRE-APPROVED for a VISA card with a credit limit of $25,000,000.00!

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Just sign the back of the enclosed card and begin your trouble-free lifestyle!

Sincerely,

PLATINUM PLUS VISA

Dear Mr. Bradley:

Thank you very much for your recent letter. All of us here at ESPN Networks and the Classic Sports Channel wish you the very best in the primary campaigns.

Of course, those of us who are old enough to remember when you played for the New York Knicks are rooting for you!

The bad news, though, is that we cannot at this time "replay" or "re-present" (to use your words) any of those games on our networks, much less with you as a host, either alone or with Michael Jordan, as you suggested.

There simply isn't enough time—or "dayparts," to use industry parlance—to justify running decades-old basketball games when there are so many other new and dynamic sports to broadcast.

You're right to mention that "equal time laws might make this a little sticky," but after talking it over with our lawyers, the "equal time" issue did not seem to be a problem. Those laws are enforced only when they seem to unfairly benefit an "active, operative" campaign. So you see, it isn't the "equal time" statutes that force us to decline your kind offer. It's those pesky dayparts!

Thanks again for your interest in ESPN Networks and Classic Sports Channel.

Sincerely,

ESPN NETWORKS

Dear Mr. Keyes:

Thank you very much for your recent application for a DISCOVER card.

We cannot offer you a card at this time. The following consumer data services were used to act on your request: EQUIFAX, INC., and TRW, INC.

If you feel we have made our determination in error, you may submit a new application.

Thank you,

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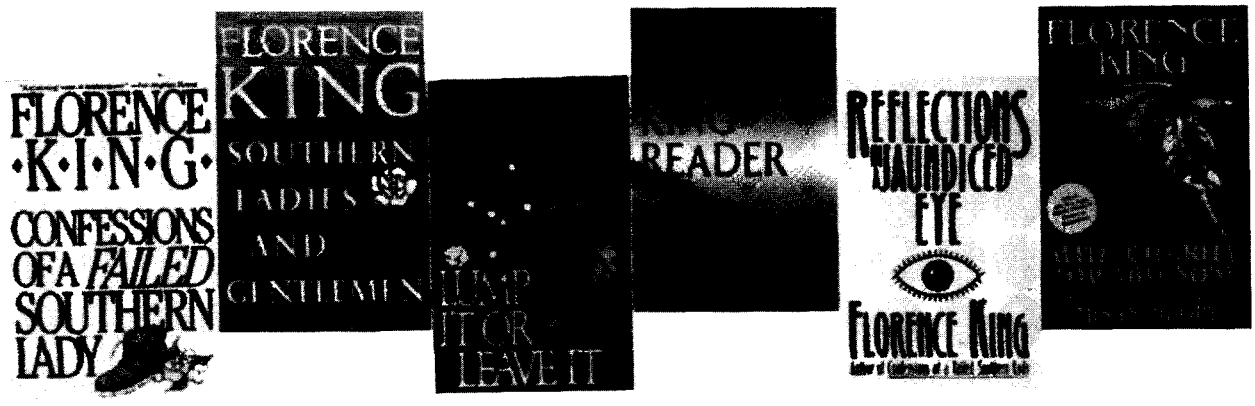
ALL THE KING'S BOOKS



She's America's Misanthrope. She's the Queen of Spleen. She's Florence King. Now Get This Curmudgeon's Classic Books—Direct from *National Review.*

Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady The unrivaled account of growing up in an eccentric Southern family (read it and you'll know why Little Florence would have been beloved by even W. C. Fields). Hailed as one of the best memoirs ever written, and rightly so: this true tale of Granny's gone-awry attempt to raise Florence as a Perfect Southern Lady overflows with wit, gusto, bawdiness, and flat-out unsurpassed writing. This peek into the rearing of America's reigning misanthrope is a must for any King fan, and anyone who enjoys an uproarious read. "A stunning book, a masterpiece." *–Los Angeles Times* **$11.95/quality paperback.**

Southern Ladies and Gentlemen *The* guide to the ways and means of Southern culture. King wields her terrible swift stiletto to slice through the kudzu of Dixie manners and archetypes, including the Southern Woman, the Self-Rejuvenating Virgin, and the Good Ole Boy. "This is the best book ever written about the South....And on top of that it's delectably funny." *–Chattanooga Times* **$10.95/quality paperback.**

Lump It or Leave It King gives no quarter in these acid-laced reflections on American tomfoolery. From the joys of menopause to the hazards of fame, from college professors ("incapable of earning a living with either their minds or their hands") and the U.S. government ("the crude leading the crud") to that favorite of subjects, the South ("if at first you don't secede, try, try, again"), there are few blockheads or brainless trends left standing after Miss Anthrope has her way with them. "The scent of sulpher and brimstone wafts off the page....venom on a par with Dorothy Parker's literary bite." *–Chicago Sun-Times* **$9.95/quality paperback.**

The Florence King Reader This wallop-packing, 200-proof best-of will leave literary livers cirrhotic as punch-drunk readers beg for another round. From her biting essays and *NR* columns to her icon-smashing reviews and book selections (including a chapter from her long-lost historical novel, *The Barbarian Princess*), this King-size collection is a must for aficionados and neophytes. "One of the few contemporary American essayists of sufficient pungency and wit to be almost always worth reading." *– Washington Post* **$13.95/quality paperback.**

Reflections in a Jaundiced Eye King administers industrial-strength smelling salts to rouse any spirit that's been overcome by the smog of "caring 'n' compassion." This collection of brilliant essays dishes out curmudgeon justice by exalting the likes of Good King Herod and Spinsterhood while abasing the culturally malignant (including "Democrazy" and the "Cult of Helpism"). "To say that Florence King doesn't suffer fools gladly is an understatement akin to suggesting that Fred Astaire could maneuver quite nicely on the dance floor." *– People* **$8.95/quality paperback.**

With Charity Toward None: A Fond Look at Misanthropy America's unreconstructed people-hater gleefully separates the weak from the chaffing in this masterpiece on *la vie misanthrope* ranging from Timon of Athens to Ty Cobb. Zip open the body bags of King's victims and you'll find faux misanthropes (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Andy Rooney), closet misanthropes (Richard Nixon), and a slew of humanitarian rabble. "The only trouble with this book is that its covers are too close together." *–New York Times* **$9.95/quality paperback.**

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Boris on a Pedestal

DAVID PRYCE-JONES

Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life, by Leon Aron (St. Martin's, 934 pp., $35)

BORIS YELTSIN had a career unpredictable from beginning to end. A hard-core Communist, he reinvented himself as Russia's first democratically elected president. In the process he engaged in a power struggle with Mikhail Gorbachev that had a Homeric quality about it. Yeltsin's energy was as reckless as it was impressive, and he had a gambler's dangerous courage. Did he really have the measure of his historic role as he crashed his way through failures and successes alike, or was the destruction of Communism and the Soviet empire one of those happy accidents that every so often regenerate human hopes? That is a question to fascinate posterity.

The man was massively built, with a sportsman's physique, the voice of a Russian bass, and hair prematurely white and beautifully combed. He had presence, and projected it variously to suit the audience and the mood of the moment—the Siberian primitive, a bear in a wild rage, and then in contrast a czar, simultaneously savior and sinner, and finally the spokesman for nothing less than the aspiration of Russians at last to be free from the unrelieved despotism of their history. The years in power expired in impotence and corruption, and he resigned like a chess player under the menace of inescapable checkmate. His successor, Vladimir Putin, lately a KGB shining star, now promises an updated mutant of Communism, or despotism with a human face.

Yeltsin himself has published several ghostwritten pleas in his own defense,

Boris Yeltsin by Roman Genn

and there are Russian journalists who form a claque to give him the benefit of the doubt. Leon Aron is the first to come up with a full-throated oratorio of praise. For him, Yeltsin was faultless, a great man who did no wrong; but if in fact he did do wrong, then it was right; and if it wasn't right, then he had no other choice. Instinctively sound, he rose to every occasion.

Born in Moscow in 1954, Aron was just too late for Stalin but in time for firsthand knowledge of Communism. In the gloomy days of Brezhnev, he was able to emigrate to the United States, and today he is director of Russian studies at the American Enterprise Institute. Relief that he is no longer a Muscovite permeates his book. He brings a lot of inside information, some of it rather showy, and in Russian phrases too. Everyone who is anyone in Moscow opinion-making circles gave him interviews by the hundred, all duly scissored and pasted and footnoted over 900 garrulous and exhausting pages. If there is a byway, Aron cannot resist dawdling in it, indulging in minute details of politics which are far beyond the scope of biography. Though Yeltsin will never have a biographer more determined to justify him, he himself seems to have provided Aron with no information. This failure to collaborate in what should have seemed providential image-fixing is the book's chief mystery.

Like all Russians of his generation, Yeltsin grew up in squalor and fear. His grandfather was deported from his village as a kulak, a peasant accused of being rich, and he soon died. His father was sentenced to three years in a hard-labor camp. An uncle was exiled as a "saboteur." Thoroughly brutalized, the Yeltsin parents were eventually reunited with their children—and a goat—in a one-story wooden barracks which they had to share with a score of other families. The need to escape seems to have motivated Yeltsin. A good student, a hard worker, by profession an engineer, he was self-made. In the industrial city of Sverdlovsk, which has now reverted to its former name of Ekaterinburg, he rose through the ranks of a typical Soviet construction enterprise, and simultaneously up through the Communist party.

Provincial and intellectually limited, he never had time for theory, Marxist or any other. A party man through and through, he bullied others to achieve whatever the plan demanded. This single-minded Stakhanovite concern with norms and output earned him promotion. Himself appointed general secretary in 1985, Gorbachev handpicked Yeltsin that same year to run the Moscow city party organization, and then to join the Politburo, the supreme ruling body of the totalitarian state. Gorbachev too had grown up amid squalor and fear. By means of reform and openness, the famous perestroika and glasnost, he believed that he was in a position to perfect Communism, and in Yeltsin he thought he saw a man like himself.

The evolution of Yeltsin from loyal ally of Gorbachev into deadly rival is

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open to several interpretations, to do with personality and the exploitation of opportunity through the lying and intrigues that the Communist system standardized for everyone. But the decisive factor, according to Aron, was Yeltsin's discovery in Moscow that perestroika and glasnost were beautiful but inapplicable ideas. Ordinary people, as Yeltsin was the first Communist leader ever to admit openly, led lives of helpless degradation, while party bosses were privileged thugs. Nothing could be done to change these extremes. Taking the unprecedented step of resigning from the Politburo in October 1987, Yeltsin became an instant folk hero and martyr.

■

Yeltsin pushed through his form of a state and called it democracy, a word he misappropriated like the old Communist he was.

■

Lenin had always maintained that the only real danger to Communism lay in factionalism. The moment the party ceased to speak in a single voice, its claim to absolute authority was open to challenge. To protect themselves against such an emergency, previous general secretaries would have had Yeltsin murdered or at least exiled. Gorbachev merely demoted him. This was also unprecedented, and a credit to Gorbachev's character. At the same time, the leniency of the response revealed that he completely misread the essential nature of Communism. The instrument of force alone guaranteed the party's supremacy, and the least attempt to moderate it—never mind genuine reform—led straight to confusion and chaos.

Virtually all observers had always agreed that, for human reasons, Communism was not sustainable in the long run; but the likely ending of the Soviet system in world war and apocalypse was too frightful to envisage. The introduction of a process of election to the Soviet and then the Russian parliaments proved to be all that was necessary. The process was partial, and rigged in several respects, but it was still enough to widen factionalism out into open politics. An alternative to the Communist monopoly of power was at hand. The merits of democratic procedure have rarely been so convincingly demonstrated.

Almost certainly, Yeltsin saw in these elections only the means to have his revenge on Gorbachev. Their mutual animosity had become obsessive and total. Nobody could predict who would win, or what the consequences might be for the losers. Anxious to be on the winning side, petrified by Stalinist memories of Siberia and worse, bureaucrats and generals and even the KGB suspended all decision-making until they knew which way to jump in safety. The state was paralyzed.

Far less intelligent than Gorbachev, Yeltsin won through tactical skill, daring, the support of Andrei Sakharov and the handful of like-minded reformers who understood what was at stake—and last but most importantly, luck. Unforeseeably, the coup of August 1991 enabled Yeltsin to seize the role of popular tribune and champion of liberty, standing on a tank for all the world to applaud and remember. The August conspirators well knew that force was the prime Communist instrument, and it is again inexplicable—the hand of fortune—that they did not make sure to kill Yeltsin. In the aftermath, he duly rubbished Gorbachev, dissolved the Communist party and the Soviet Union too, granting the national republics their freedom. What Gorbachev had begun unconsciously, Yeltsin finished consciously. It was in his interest to do so, but a wonderful feat all the same, and Aron is right to acclaim it.

Gurkow/Action Press/Saba

Yeltsin campaigns in Tatarstan, 1996

The Russia that Yeltsin took over was a ruin the like of which had never been seen in peacetime. Here was a constitutional and legal void, a bankrupt economy, and, most dire of all, a moral wasteland. In his own bulldozer style, Yeltsin pushed through his form of a state and called it democracy, a word he misappropriated like the old Communist he was—its proper functioning seemingly remained alien or remote to him. He promulgated a constitution that gave him as president an almost absolute power, including supremacy over the legislature and the judiciary. He ruled directly by decree, signing thousands of them every year and appointing governors to do his bidding in the provinces, as czars had done in their own day. In the absence of any checks and balances, he set the unique record of flattening with artillery two parliaments, one in Moscow, the other in Grozny. Threatened with losing the 1996 elections, he was tempted to annul them altogether in the tried and tested Communist manner, but at the last moment refrained from doing so. He had trouble accepting privatization as the indispensable basis of future freedom and prosperity, but nonetheless allowed it to proceed, and then drifted in the nationwide and criminal asset-stripping that ensued. There is freedom of the press in Moscow, but still no rule of law.

In the mid 1990s, rumors first bubbled up that Yeltsin might be railing loudly against corruption, but was himself a symptom of it. Supposedly, he had foreign accounts, and owned property abroad. His daughter, Tatiana Dyachenko, was accused of accepting bribes and then laundering the money on her own and her father's behalf. Yeltsin's cronies were businessmen, generically called the Family, most of them busily transforming former state monopolies into private monopolies of their own, protected by hired gunmen. A Yeltsin signature on a decree was the equivalent of a title to property, and clearly the man could not possibly read and digest the stack of decrees placed every day on his desk. Here was the ideal breeding ground for middlemen, lobbyists, inter-

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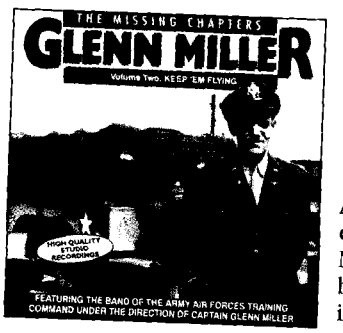
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mediaries, and percentage-brokers. No social contract could form. Yeltsin came to preside over a state without functioning taxation and welfare systems, without a responsible bureaucracy or military. So close was this experiment to anarchy that many poor people were hungry, and some of them hankered for a return to Soviet tyranny.

Yeltsin's intellectual limitations caught up with him. Apparently incapable of analyzing and remedying the causes of breakdown and lawlessness, he retired into a secluded moodiness and increasing illness. Stirring himself, he would fire his prime ministers and their cabinets, sometimes on television, without any warning, in the manner of a conjurer with a favorite trick. Clapping and cheering from the Clinton administration drowned the groans of Russians.

According to Aron, always on the defensive, Yeltsin in office broke the law but only in behalf of some higher interest, and he compares Yeltsin in this respect to Abraham Lincoln and Charles de Gaulle. There were no ground rules about how to make a fresh start after a catastrophe like Communism, it is true, but lawbreaking is hardly the convincing test of greatness that Aron thinks.

About Yeltsin the man, his tastes and beliefs, his personal conduct and character, Aron has little to add to the official version crafted in the Kremlin. For some time now, the Moscow media have been publishing more and more detailed allegations about the activities of Tatiana Dyachenko and the Family. Gigantic scams briefly loom into sight, only to vanish like the *Flying Dutchman*. This may be all malicious gossip, but then why was it necessary for Yeltsin to obtain an indemnity from all investigation into his financial affairs before he was prepared to resign in favor of Putin? Aron is silent on this whole topic, either through reticence or reluctance to remove his rose-tinted spectacles.

Communism vanished with hardly a shot fired in anger, and humanity will always have reason to be grateful for this miracle—grateful too for Yeltsin's leading part in it. But in spite of its length, this biography might one day soon prove less than complete. **NR**

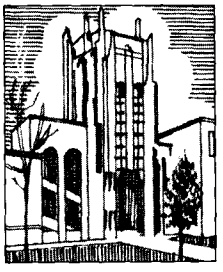
A World Renewed

MICHAEL POTEMRA

Death on a Friday Afternoon: Meditations on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross, by Richard John Neuhaus (Basic, 272 pp., $24)

RELIGION is a universal aspect of human life. So is suffering; and these two facts are intimately connected. The world's many faiths offer hope and consolation to a world that is obviously broken. Some of them do so by denying that suffering exists, in the true sense of existence; others portray it as somehow an aspect of a higher good.

At the center of the specifically Christian form of religion is a man who suffers. A possible key, then, to understanding Christianity is making sense of the suffering and death of Christ: Why is it so important—indeed, in most denominations, central—to that tradition? Richard John Neuhaus has set himself this ambitious task of explaining the inexplicable: a God who died, and yet continues to be worshiped, fervently, to this day.



To Neuhaus, unusual turns of fate are nothing new. He was a Lutheran minister, and became a Catholic priest. He was a leader of the Vietnam-era antiwar movement, and is now one of America's most important neoconservative intellectuals. Through his magazine, *First Things*, and his celebrated book, *The Naked Public Square*, he attracted respect as a political thinker; with this new book he addresses issues of the soul.

Neuhaus's contribution takes the form of a meditation on the seven last phrases spoken by Christ on the Cross—the famous "Seven Last Words" that have been such an important part of Catholic theology, and also of the history of Western music.

Neuhaus begins with the insight that while theodicy—the attempt to justify God's ways to man—has been a staple of religious literature throughout history, it is not the most promising avenue for the investigation of the significance of the suffering and death of Jesus. What is needed, rather, is a "homodicy": an understanding of how man's ways can be, or have been, justified to God. Human beings cause suffering to each other, and "the truth," writes Neuhaus, "is that we are incapable of setting this right. . . . The more we try to set things right, the more we compound our guilt."

It has been said that original sin is the only religious dogma that is confirmed, every day, by empirical observation. This is an overstatement—it asks of empiricism an unrealistic ability to discern causes—but it is more true than false. When at least one of us (I speak only of myself) sees a wrong, his first impulse, his "default mode," is to commit another wrong. Only when—and if—other emotional and rational factors intervene, does he respond with actions that tend to repair the harm instead of aggravating it. As an astute observer has noted, if you expand the stage from an apartment to a planet, it becomes clear that the world, in its default mode, is Rwanda.

If man's ways are to be justified, it is God, says Neuhaus, who will have to repair the breach.

One of the best artistic presentations of this concept is Francis Ford Coppola's 1974 film masterpiece, *The Conversation*. A wiretapper starts to believe, based on his own interpretation of his tapes, that his work is furthering a businessman's plot to murder his wife and her lover. He spends the most emotionally wrenching parts of the film working up the courage to intervene—only to discover, once he has done so, that the plot was the exact reverse: It was the wife and lover who were conspiring to kill the businessman, a crime to which he has now become an unwitting accomplice.

Even men of good will, then, find themselves implicated in the world's

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brokenness. If man's ways are to be justified—made just, made right—it is God, says Neuhaus, who will have to repair the breach. Thus Christianity's insistence on the Incarnation of God, the intimate union of divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus.

Neuhaus presents the suffering and death of Jesus as the axis of the world, because only in that event do we see a fundamental reversal of the world's values. One tendency in religion, perhaps best represented by non-dualist Hinduism, asserts that the world's values, the suffering they cause, and indeed the world itself, are all illusory. The path to peace, in this view, is to commune with the genuine ground of being that is beyond the suffering of experience. This tendency, Neuhaus notes, is present within Christianity itself; but he contends—supported by tradition—that it does not do justice to the historical facts about Jesus. Jesus could have been a successful guru converting millions with a sophisticated PR campaign. He chose instead to be jeered at by yokels as he died "out on the killing fields by the Jerusalem city dump."

Why? To show mankind that this world, too, has meaning. He could presumably have "cured" the world by remote control. But humanity, he is telling us, is more important than that. The human race—indeed, the entire created order—is intended for joy, its own and that of its Creator, but it is more than a mere plaything for the Divine. It has its own dignity, a gift from the Father in whose image it was created; now it will have hope, a gift from that Father's Son. But hope, says Neuhaus, "is not finally hopeful unless it has taken into account everything that contradicts hope." That means taking the world seriously, to the point of death.

Neuhaus says that this hope is intended for all humanity; but his interpretation of this principle will annoy many evangelical Protestants, as well as those among Neuhaus's fellow Catholics who espouse an excessively literal understanding of the dogma that "there is no salvation outside the Church."

Neuhaus contends that while "cognitive humility" demands that we acknowledge our ignorance on this subject, we are nonetheless both entitled and

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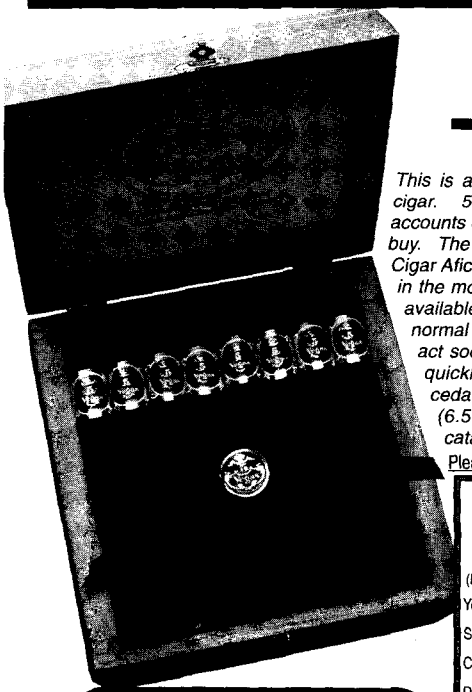

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encouraged to hope that all people will enjoy God's favor in heaven; that while hell exists, we are doing God's will when we hope and pray that hell be empty. Neuhaus's arguments for this position are based on the nature of Christ's sufferings: Because God has been on the Cross—a fact that will remain true for all eternity—"God is present in the forsaken so that nobody—nobody ever,

■

Neuhaus says that Christians should continue to tell their non-Christian neighbors about Christ for the simple reason that Christ asked them to.

■

nobody anywhere at any time under any circumstance—is forsaken. . . . [Christ's] penetrating to the heart of darkness means that nobody, absolutely nobody, is alone in the heart of darkness. . . . Our new situation is radically different from and radically better than the original human situation. . . . Humanity can never again be alienated from God, the bond between God and humanity can never be broken, for in the God-man Jesus our humanity participates in the eternal life of God."

If this salvation applies to all humanity, what rational basis is there for continued Christian evangelization? Neuhaus's answer is disarmingly guileless. He says that Christians should continue to tell their non-Christian neighbors about Christ for the simple reason that Christ asked them to; and further, that love for others, and joy in their companionship, will make Christians want to report the news about Christ as widely as possible.

Neuhaus recounts a moving anecdote about how he started down the intellectual path that led to his convictions about the universality of salvation. When he was a 7-year-old boy growing up in Canada, he attended a "mission festival" at which a guest preacher was delivering a fire-and-brimstone stemwinder: "The preacher suddenly stopped. For a full minute there was complete silence as he looked intently at his wristwatch. Then he tossed his head, threw out his arm and, pointing directly at me in the third row, announced, 'In the last one minute, thirty-seven thousand lost souls have gone to eternal damnation without a saving knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!'"

The preacher—avatar of a still-important ideological current in Christianity—provoked a "theological crisis" in the young Neuhaus, one with which he continues to grapple today. Could a Son of God willing to die a sadistically brutal death for sinners subsequently countenance the mass damnation of so many of them? Would he not, rather, in the words of St. Paul, "desire all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth," in whatever mysterious fashion this might be accomplished? These questions, when posed in the context of the sufferings of Christ, answer themselves.

Neuhaus's book clearly deals with major issues, but in focusing on them one inevitably gives short shrift to its numerous incidental joys. For example, he points out that "the last recorded words of Mary in the New Testament [are] 'Do whatever he [Jesus] tells you.'" This is as succinct, and accurate, a summary of the Catholic tradition on Mary as I have ever read: She was never intended to serve as a goddess-figure, as comparative-religion scholars and no-popery pamphleteers have contended over the decades; she is, instead, the proto-disciple, with a marked family resemblance to her son.

Such insights abound in Neuhaus's excellent book. Very few religious works succeed in appealing across inter-confessional boundaries without sacrificing a great deal in terms of both literary quality and intellectual heft. This book is a rare exception to the rule. It's well written and intellectually challenging for all readers, not just those who profess Neuhaus's faith, or indeed any faith at all. To understand this book, all a reader needs is an interest in the basics of the human condition. Neuhaus has depicted Jesus—not a tentatively reconstructed "Jesus of history," but the Christ of faith in all his theological fullness—as a figure of importance not solely or even chiefly for Christians, but for the human race. **NR**

No Way to Treat a Lady

TERRY TEACHOUT

Willa Cather and the Politics of Criticism, by Joan Acocella (Nebraska, 128 pp., $20)

IN 1920, H. L. Mencken called Willa Cather "a woman who, after a long apprenticeship, has got herself into the front rank of American novelists." As usual, the Great Mentioner of American letters was right on the money. But her cool chronicles of prairie life and its discontents contained no Joycean word-juggling, no torrid sex scenes, no class consciousness—none of the ingredients, in short, that literary intellectuals of the '30s deemed indispensable. So a new generation of tastemakers dropped Cather down the memory hole, leaving her to middle-aged, middlebrow critics and the common readers who never swerved in their loyalty to the author of *My Ántonia* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. It said everything about her that she won the Pulitzer Prize and made the cover of *Time* magazine: one moist kiss of death for each cheek.

The mills of trendiness grind ceaselessly, and in the age of feminist criticism Willa Cather became a potentially hot property once again. But getting her back into the classroom wasn't quite as simple as it looked. For in addition to being a woman, she was also a New Deal-hating Republican, a fellow traveler of Roman Catholicism, a firm believer in the gospel of art for art's sake, and a testy anti-feminist who dismissed most lady poets as wet-eyed half-wits and most lady novelists as simply incompetent: "Has any woman ever really had the art instinct, the art necessity? Is it not with them a substitute, a transferred enthusiasm, an escape valve for what has sought or is seeking another channel?"

How, then, to detoxify her politically

Mr. Teachout, the music critic of *Commentary* and a contributor to *Time*, is writing *H. L. Mencken: A Life*.

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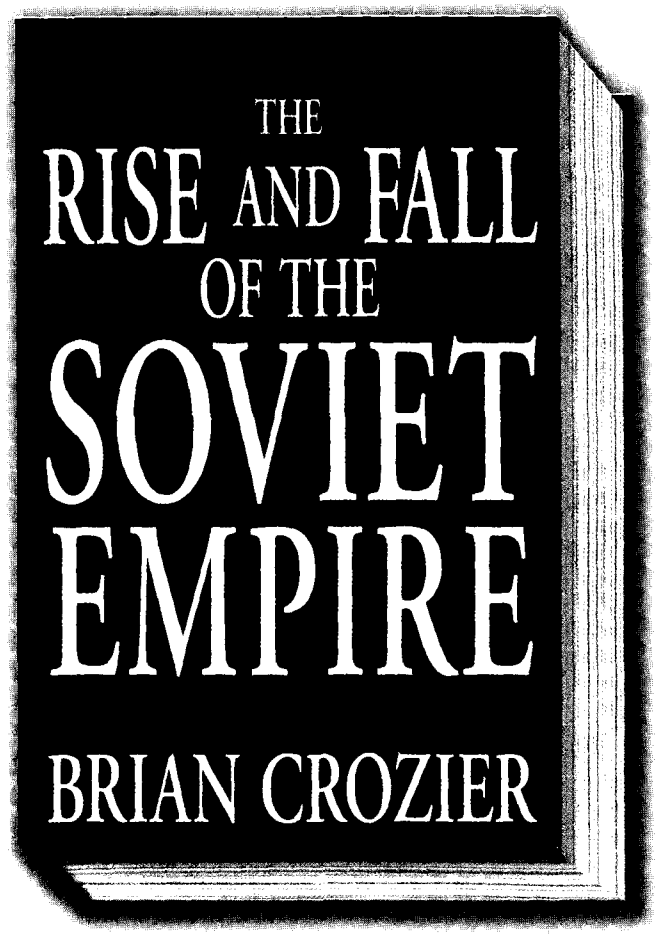

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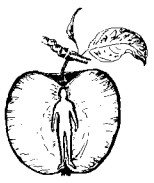
incorrect life and work and render them fit for consumption by delicate undergraduates? The answer turned out to be breathtakingly simple. In 1984, Sharon O'Brien published an essay in an obscure academic journal announcing that Cather was a "self-identified" lesbian and that her homosexuality was the "emotional source of her fiction." Presto change-o: Today, virtually all Cather criticism takes these assertions for granted. The woman whom Granville Hicks had dismissed in proper Marxist fashion as being unequal to "the harshness of our world" is now a major novelist—or, to be exact, a major *lesbian* novelist, every bit as good as Virginia Woolf and Alice Walker, and maybe even Radclyffe Hall. There was only one catch: O'Brien made it all up.

One of the most unlikely things about the tale of how Willa Cather became a lesbian is that it was first told in *The New Yorker* (yes, *The New Yorker*!) by a dance critic. Joan Acocella is also a literary scholar by avocation, and by means unknown and unimaginable to me, she not only persuaded Tina Brown to print her exposé in 1995, but has now contrived to have an expanded version published by a reputable academic house. This devastatingly concise book isn't going to win its fearless author any prizes—she marches through the ranks of Cather scholars the way Sherman marched through Georgia—but anyone who has had it up to here with political correctness should buy a copy of *Willa Cather and the Politics of Criticism* and get ready to cheer, long and loudly.



According to Acocella, Cather probably was romantically attracted to women. But there is no documentary evidence that she ever did anything about it, and scarcely more proof to be culled from her novels. Indeed, that was the very point of her work: She sought to be the kind of novelist who writes not about "who marries whom, or at least who goes to bed with whom," but about the full panoply of human interests, of which love is but a single aspect. (Acocella herself has a special interest in artists who seek to break through what she calls "the boundary of the sex plot," a theme she also explores in her fine 1993 biography of the choreographer Mark Morris.)

Human interests, mind you, not female ones: Cather felt equally competent to write about men, and did so no less memorably. But Sharon O'Brien, by her own admission, was determined to turn her idol into a single-issue cultural politician, thereby "rewriting one of the silencing stories of my own life, my domination by women who tried to erase me without ever seeing who I was." (How very '80s: biography as therapy.) So, Acocella says, O'Brien cooked the books, falsely paraphrasing an unpublished Cather letter so as to suggest that its author was confessing to "unnatural" feelings for a female friend. O'Brien made this "evidence" the centerpiece of the scholarly article that she later parlayed into a book-length "psychosexual study" that established her as the queen of Cather studies.

Far from being a purveyor of proto-identity politics, Willa Cather was in fact an artist of extraordinary breadth.

Since then, Willa Cather's lesbianism, such as it was or wasn't, has become the grain of sand around which a thousand costume pearls of critical theory have accreted: "In a 1986 essay," writes Acocella, "Judith Fetterley accused Jane Rule of anti-homosexual bias for describing *My Ántonia* as a serene book—in other words, for refusing to acknowledge its latent lesbian agony. 'Homophobia can go no further,' Fetterley declared." But Acocella, though she has assembled quite a nifty little chamber of critical horrors, is not your ordinary outrage-collecting cultural conservative. In fact, she is not a conservative at all, but an old-fashioned, determinedly non-radical feminist who insists that the proper goal of art is to describe life in all its proliferating, ideology-transcending complexity:

> Will it be useful if we argue that while men and heterosexuals can write about anything they want, women can only write about gender, homosexuals only about sexuality? "Why would Willa Cather celebrate male bonding?" asks O'Brien. And why would Leo Tolstoy celebrate a girl's experience at her first ball? Because they wanted to write about life.

To which I would add that an unintended effect of the criticism Acocella decries is to make its subjects seem too narrow to bother with. The irony, of course, is that far from being a purveyor of proto-identity politics, Cather was in fact an artist of extraordinary breadth, and the more I read her, the surer I am that she is not merely a woman novelist, or a regional novelist, or even an American novelist: She is a *great* novelist, clear-eyed and strong-hearted, who describes the harshness of the world in words of calm and consoling beauty.

Among other things, she is close to unique in her ability to convey the feel of small-town life without any of the sentiment or self-pity that have poisoned the work of so many other American writers. "Out of her father's children," she writes of Alexandra Bergson, the heroine of *O Pioneers!*, "there was one who was fit to cope with the world, who had not been tied to the plow, and who had a personality apart from the soil. And that, she reflected, was what she had worked for. She felt well satisfied with her life."

Yet there is still more to Cather than her matchlessly sympathetic chronicles of hardscrabble prairie lives. The exquisitely well-written *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, her greatest novel, embodies a vision of life that might be described, however paradoxically, as Christian stoicism. Certainly this chronicle of two French priests consecrated to the mission of bringing the Gospel to the American Southwest is unambiguously spiritual in its implications. But its author is no less deeply imbued with the tragic sense of life—hence her elegiac tone—and far too tough-minded to stoop to the over-fragrant piety that turns religious art to religious kitsch:

> During those last weeks of the Bishop's life he thought very little about death; it was the Past he was leaving. The future would take care of itself. But he had an intellectual curiosity about dying; about the changes that took place in a man's beliefs and scale of values. More and more, life seemed to him an experience of the Ego, in no sense the Ego itself.

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This conviction, he believed, was something apart from his religious life; it was an enlightenment that came to him as a man, a human creature. And he noticed that he judged conduct differently now; his own and that of others. The mistakes of his life seemed unimportant; accidents that had occurred *en route*....

It is an act of cultural vandalism in the first degree to sum up with a single trendy adjective the woman who wrote those lines, and Joan Acocella swells with righteous anger at those theory-mad pigeonholers who would dare to try it: "She broke out of jail, and now they are putting her—and all other women writers—back in." Out of that anger, she has made this eloquent, wholly admirable book. **NR**

Not to Be

NORAH VINCENT

Gertrude and Claudius, by John Updike (Knopf, 212 pp., $23)

To a great extent, the story of Western literature has been one of imitation. Perhaps homage is a better word. Virgil paid homage to Homer. Dante paid homage to Virgil. Milton paid homage to Dante. More recently Joyce retold the *Odyssey* and set it in early-20th-century Dublin. Shakespeare, too, appropriated the classics of ancient Greece and Rome, retelling them in plays like *Julius Caesar* and *Troilus and Cressida*.

So it isn't surprising that one of the reigning masters of contemporary fiction should attempt his own retelling of what is widely considered the best play ever written. After all, *Hamlet* itself was a borrowed Norse legend that Shakespeare dropped into the frame of a Senecan tragedy and updated in Renaissance Denmark.

Depending on how much you know about the play's sources, you may be a bit thrown by the names in the first three-quarters of John Updike's *Gertrude and Claudius*. In the original version, which appeared in Saxo Grammaticus's *History of the Danes* (c. 1200), Prince Hamlet was called Amleth, Hamlet *père* was Horwendil, Gertrude was Gerutha, and Hamlet's felonious Uncle Claudius was Feng. The second interpreter of the Hamlet legend, the French man of letters François Belleforest (*Histoires tragiques*, c. 1570), used slightly different spellings and modernized the Danish court somewhat. Shakespeare changed or anglicized the names, and modernized the play altogether.

Updike has separated his novel into three parts, roughly corresponding with Saxo, Belleforest, and Shakespeare. He thereby achieves a kind of historical progress in each part, moving skillfully and subtly over centuries, nimbly melding his brash Vikings into scheming Castiglionian courtiers. Updike's technique works well, and helps to bridge the yawning gap between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance that is typified by Shakespeare's eponymous father and son.

Updike begins with Saxo's Horwendil, a Viking warrior whose savage likeness can more readily be found in the Icelandic sagas than in the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Updike has clearly made use of the sagas in drawing this character, whom he likens to Nietzsche's pillaging "blond beast." This king lives and dies by a primitive code of revenge, and is neither the Machiavel that Shakespeare made of Claudius, nor the enlightened courtier/scholar that he made of the brooding prince. Progressing quickly through Belleforest's and Shakespeare's versions—and using Shakespeare more as a springboard than as a source—Updike extrapolates backward from the play into a past that Shakespeare only hints at and assumes.

In Shakespeare's play, Hamlet *père* is a virtuous and noble king slain by his inferior brother, the Machiavellian Claudius. Updike, conversely, draws a highly sympathetic picture of Claudius and an unflattering one of King Hamlet. Feng is educated and charming—a suitor far superior to his brother Horwendil, to whom Gerutha was given in an arranged marriage, and whom she deems "unsubtle." Most of Updike's novel is taken up with the story of Gerutha's seduction by Feng—a seduction in which she is a willing participant, eager both to escape the lackluster attentions of her husband, the doltish king, and to experience a sexual gratification he cannot give her. On their wedding night, Updike tells us, Horwendil was so besotted that he passed out before consummating the marriage. Updike's Gerutha has never forgotten or overcome this slight, and it leaves her prey to Feng's warm, sensuous flattery.

Updike is much less concerned with Shakespeare's play itself than with his own ingenious approach to it.

Their clandestine affair begins well before Horwendil's murder, and, in fact, Feng's desire to legitimize their love—not his kingly ambition—is portrayed as his primary motive. "Lord Christ," he says to himself, "this love of her is eating me alive."

Updike's bias toward Feng and Gerutha and his evident dislike for Hamlet (*père* and *fils*) turn Shakespeare's Oedipal drama into a beautified love story between a rightfully usurping brother and an understandably adulterous queen whose well-deserved happiness is systematically spoiled by "a foppish, rude brat." As Updike sums it up in the novel's brief afterword: "Putting aside the murder being covered up, Claudius seems a capable king, Gertrude a noble queen, Ophelia a treasure of sweetness, Polonius a tedious but not evil counselor, Laertes a generic young man. Hamlet pulls them all into death."

But Claudius's crime and his coverup are nothing to put aside lightly: They are the linchpin of the play. Without them, the tragedy of Hamlet could not be set in motion. Updike is well aware of this, and his cavalier dismissal of Claudius's misdeeds is a glaring act of hubris and an indicator that *Gertrude and Claudius* is not an entirely serious novel.

Miss Vincent, a columnist at the *Village Voice*, is writing a biography of Hamlet.

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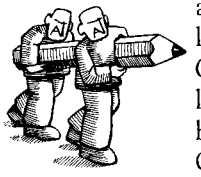
Updike ends his tale where Shakespeare's play begins, with Claudius relishing the fruits of his as-yet-undetected crime: "[H]is queen stood up beside him, beaming in her rosy goodness, her freckled face alight with pride at his performance. He took her yielding hand in his, his hard scepter in the other. He had gotten away with it." This is another one of Updike's little jokes, it seems. We all know very well that Claudius hasn't gotten away with it. But as he demonstrates throughout *Gertrude and Claudius*, Updike is much less concerned with Shakespeare's play itself than with his own ingenious approach to it.

It might be said that Updike does the play a service by unpacking Shakespeare's all-too-human characters. To think of Claudius as a devil is to limit him immensely, while making Gertrude a whore, as Hamlet does, leaves out too much of the human complexity of Denmark's royal family, which Shakespeare meant us to infer. In showing us the obnoxious, antiheroic side of Prince Hamlet, Updike seems to be following the dissenting *Hamlet* critic Salvador de Madariaga, who sought to demolish the romantic view of Hamlet painted centuries before by Goethe and Coleridge. Their image of Hamlet as the consummate beautiful soul collapsing under the burden of an unrelenting fate has been the dominant interpretation ever since, though most modern critics have conceded that Hamlet is by no means blameless; he is often cruel, and even heartless. Take his cavalier murder of the bumbling Polonius, a deed for which he expresses no remorse, though it drives his love Ophelia to madness and suicide; or the fatal dispatch of his conniving school chums Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with the brusque words, "They are not near my conscience."

Gertrude and Claudius sports an arid wit at times, and thereby lacks the air of gravitas that one has come to expect of everything connected with Hamlet. But after centuries of beating this gloomy Danish horse, the relief of levity is far overdue.

One can't help guffawing, for example, when Updike renders Act I, scene 2, in his own words. This is the famous scene where Claudius eulogizes his dead brother, strains to justify his hasty marriage to the widow, and tries to ingratiate himself with Hamlet, who merely utters bitter gibes—the famous "A little more than kin and less than kind," and "Not so, my lord. I am too much in the sun." All this Updike revises as follows: "Hamlet rebuffed with some muttered puns the King's fatherly inquiry after his health."

Updike has sprinkled his novel with many such delightful asides. His King Hamlet, for example—who, as we know, is later murdered while napping in his orchard—complains to Gertrude about experiencing "uncanny spells of fatigue." Gertrude replies cheerfully: "Normal aging, merely, darling. I too need a nap more than formerly. You'll live another 20 years at least." Such zingers will entertain aficionados to no end.



Ultimately, however, one wonders what Updike hoped to achieve by deflating this Danish colossus into a soap opera befitting an age in which half of all marriages end in divorce. Turning Hamlet into a spoiled suburban brat may be amusing, but in the end it's a bit like portraying Macbeth as a hen-pecked Walter Mitty. It turns the plays and characters of Shakespeare into shadows of themselves, unworthy of the sublime poetry he wrote for them. Was *Gertrude and Claudius* just a lark? Something Updike did for fun in his spare time? Or is it a case of a brilliant and erudite novelist good-naturedly thumbing his nose at the master? For all its pleasures, *Gertrude and Claudius* can't help being a disappointment to those who still find dignity and meaning in the tragic view of life. **NR**

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■ FILM ■

The Groans of Academe

JOHN SIMON

How I wanted to like ***Wonder Boys***! Directed by Curtis Hanson, who did so well by *L.A. Confidential*, it concerns the absurdities of academia of which, long ago, I had my share. I even taught briefly at one of the Pittsburgh universities, which may be the one where the movie, adapted by Steve Kloves from the Michael Chabon novel, takes place. Yet, after initial benevolence, I felt overfed and, finally, fed up. Too much cute, fey merriment, ostentatious absurdism, crazy coincidences, and incidental craziness. And barely a thimbleful of reality.

Grady Tripp, a beloved English prof, once wrote a major novel; years later, he is floundering with his second. On this day, the beginning of the school's literary weekend, his wife has just left him. His paramour, Sara Gaskell, the university chancellor who happens to be married to his department chairman, tells Grady she is pregnant by him and considering abortion. Grady's star student, James Leer, a brilliant writer and dazzlingly compulsive liar, is making trouble as usual: He threatens to shoot himself, but, finding Sara's blind dog furiously biting Grady's ankle, shoots the pooch instead. Terry Crabtree, Grady's editor, shows up for the university's literary festival, to nudge along Grady's endlessly gestating novel and sign up James's finished and terrific one. Terry is accompanied by his outrageous transvestite lover, whom he promptly drops for the willingly seduced James.

The two manuscripts, Grady's and James's, prove always misplaced or migratory; the dead dog enjoys quite a posthumous odyssey; Grady is discreetly pursued by Hannah, his likewise gifted student and tenant, in her trademark red cowboy boots. He himself is almost always wearing a marijuana haze from

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the pot package in his glove compartment—much of this peripatetic movie cruises about in cars. And I haven't even mentioned the tuba, Marilyn Monroe's wedding jacket, or Grady's blackout spells. The dialogue is discontinuous, illogical, archly oblique; 112 minutes of this age you by many hours.

Michael Douglas is a believably befuddled, shaggy Grady. Tobey Maguire, though good as the off-kilter genius James, relies on too many recycled cutenesses. Katie Holmes is delicious as Hannah, but Robert Downey Jr., as Terry, steals the show with his amiable cynicism and breakneck throwaway delivery. Inexcusable, however, is the Sara of Frances McDormand, who carries on in a way ill-befitting her role, looks, and age. Not for a moment do we believe her as Grady's yearned-for love object. But then, do we believe a writer who single-spaces thousands of pages, and is singularly indifferent to their being blown away by gusts of wind?

■ Insidiously likable is ***The Whole Nine Yards***, about a Montreal dentist, Nicholas "Oz" Oseransky, whose horrid wife, Sophie, keeps hiring people to off him, so she can collect on his life insurance. Jimmy "The Tulip" Tudeski, a hit man in hiding from a Chicago crime family, the Gogolak gang, moves in next door. Pretty soon he, too, is stalked by killers, Sophie having ratted to the Gogolaks for prize money. The jittery Oz and the relaxed Jimmy band together, and all is well until Oz, yielding to the promptings of his pretty assistant, Jill, to get himself a girl, falls for Cynthia, Jimmy's estranged wife, and ends up, along with her, on Jimmy's hit list.

Oz gambles his life to save Cynthia, who, hardened as she is, surprisingly finds herself reciprocating his feelings. Things get marvelously entangled and hilariously resolved, as we know they will be, and still, between laughs, we actually worry about the characters.

Matthew Perry, as Oz, excels at comic timing and physical comedy. But his emotional pratfalls are just as amusing and winning as he holds his frenetic own against Bruce Willis's charmingly cool comic persona, garnished with a smile poised midway between bonhomie and menace, as is his slightly hooded voice and split-second agility.

Rosanna Arquette's Sophie is overdone, but the other two women are as good as they are gorgeous. Natasha Henstridge is distant and chilly as Cynthia, but both initially and when she finally melts, enough to die for. So, too, is Amanda Peet, who superbly blends sexiness, comedy, and disturbing undertones. There is staunch supporting work from Michael Clarke Duncan and Kevin Pollak. Mitchell Kapner's script cascades smoothly, its comic effervescence never self-indulgent. Jonathan Lynn has

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Matthew Perry excels at physical comedy, but his emotional pratfalls are just as amusing.

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directed with a canny blend of bravura and geniality, and the Montreal setting, unobtrusively picturesque, contributes handsomely.

■ A group of Danish filmmakers signed a vow of chastity, called "Dogma 95." All shooting is to be done on location, with no smuggled-in props. The sound must always be simultaneous with the images, not added later. The light must be natural, the camera handheld. The unsensational action must take place here and now, and the director must not be credited. This may seem excessive, but some of it is strangely fruitful. Certainly, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen's ***Mifune*** is a heartening success.

Kresten, a young arriviste, marries the rich Claire without revealing anything about his family and penurious childhood on a dilapidated and distant island farm. The day after the wedding, he is summoned to the home he left years ago, to help bury his father and take care of his semicretinous older brother Rud. When the upper-crust Claire finds out the truth, she promptly divorces him. To help care for the helpless Rud, and run the run-down farm, he advertises for a housekeeper.

Liva, a Copenhagen call girl (to put her rebellious younger brother, Bjarke, through private school), is fed up with her creepy clients, brutal pimp, and obscene phone calls. She takes on the

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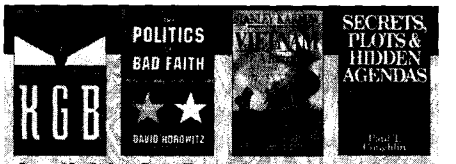

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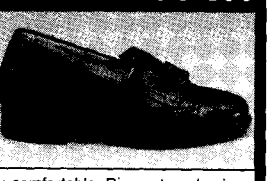

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The Board of Directors of the
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(Santiago, Chile—November 12–18, 2000)

"The more I learn about the evolution of ideas, the more I have become aware that I am simply an unrepentant Old Whig — with the stress on the 'old'."
F. A. Hayek, "Why I am not a Conservative," *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960)

The President of the Mont Pelerin Society, Dr. Ramon Diaz, notes that students of Hayek cannot ignore the single definition of his political philosophy which Hayek bequeathed to us. What can we learn from Hayek's self-definition as an Old Whig? With what values did he identify and reject by it? Is there any alternative definition more accessible to the general public?

The Hayek Fellowships will be awarded for the three best essays on the above topic. Essays of 5,000 words or less may be submitted by students or faculty members 35 years of age or younger. The essays will be judged by an international panel of three senior members of the Society. The deadline for submission of essays is May 31, 2000.

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farm job, as she thinks temporarily. Gradually, farm life begins to appeal to her, as does Kresten, and even poor, retarded Rud, who warmly responds to her. There is trouble with a lecherously envious and violent neighbor, and even Liva's fellow call girls, thinking her in grave danger, come comically and mistakenly to her rescue. Kresten, turned into an all too casual lover, nevertheless allows Liva to bring Bjarke to the farm; recalcitrant at first, the boy adapts. In

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Rather than flaunt skin-deep Hollywood profundities, *Mifune* humanely probes our paradoxical essence.

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the end, Kresten and Liva, on their now revivified farm, dance amorously in the soft lamplight allowed by the tenets of Dogma 95.

Mifune, whose title derives from a charming episode alluding to *The Seven Samurai*, reeks of true, basic humanity, virtually unknown in American movies. Country life is captured with stunning veracity and no less impressive Dogma 95 cinematography. Mostly sunless skies supply a silverpoint background against which the colors of nature and humanity come to pungently idiosyncratic life. The sparse indoor lighting makes for exquisite chiaroscuro by night, and avoids a blanketing sheen by day. But the finest light is shed on the human soul. The writer-director Kragh-Jacobsen is keenly and compassionately cognizant of the inconsistent murk in the human heart, yielding both petty nastiness and amazing generosity. Rather than flaunt skin-deep Hollywood profundities, the film humanely probes our paradoxical essence.

As Liva, Iben Hjejle has the moody vivacity of changeable weather, one moment radiantly lovely, another sullenly overcast. Her face and bearing are an aeolian harp played on by inner winds, but her spirit's faithful compass always points to the truth. Anders W. Berthelsen's Kresten is likewise unvarnishedly natural, and Jesper Asholt's Rud is, admirably, neither patronized nor sentimentalized. **NR**

■ BOOKS IN BRIEF ■

Choosing Equality: School Choice, the Constitution, and Civil Society, by Joseph P. Viteritti (Brookings, 284 pp., $29.95)

ONE of the lowest points in a presidency that has had many came in the fall of 1997, when Bill Clinton shot down a school-choice proposal that would have given low-income students in Washington, D.C., a way out of the city's dreadful public schools. For Joseph Viteritti, the episode highlighted the Faustian bargain of liberal Democrats who worry about the state of schools but have sold their souls to an education establishment wedded to the status quo. In response to this state of affairs, Viteritti, a professor at New York University and former adviser to several urban school districts, presents a case for school choice designed to appeal to liberals and conservatives alike.

Viteritti's lodestar is the promise of equality made in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. This promise, he says, ought to mean that every child, regardless of race or income, has the chance to obtain a safe, decent education; but public schools, especially in cities, have failed to provide "even this morsel of opportunity." According to both test scores and parental-satisfaction surveys, private schools—particularly Catholic ones—do better. No wonder, then, that black Americans, for example, support school choice by nearly two to one.

Viteritti approaches his subject from all angles. He analyzes the lessons of the past 200 years of education reform, tracing the arc of "progressive" education as it has become increasingly antireligious and dismissive of parents' desires, and explaining the Supreme Court's changing attitudes toward church–state concerns. Of particular interest is Viteritti's argument that inclusion of religious schools in choice plans fulfills, rather than violates, the spirit of the First Amendment.

If there is a more thorough and thoughtful argument for school choice, I am unaware of it. And if Bill Clinton truly wants to leave behind a legacy he can be proud of, reading this book—and acting on it—would be a good way to start. —CRISTOPHER RAPP

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Reduce the Debt?

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 8

MR. CLINTON'S budget has been greeted as deserved. It is a budget designed to give a political face to Pleasant Thoughts. Such thoughts include free prescription drugs for children and for old people, modest tax reductions for the middle class and the lower class, this and that for this and that, and—a Major Pleasant Thought of the season—a reduction in the national debt.

This last is an especially pernicious Pleasant Thought because it is very appealing to conservatives, and indeed debt reduction has much to commend it. But it does deserve scrutiny.

Is the national debt too large?

A rational amateur would tend to ask some basic questions. The first of these is: Is damage being done on account of the size of the debt? Such damage would be visible, for instance, if it became necessary to devalue the dollar. This would be the result of doubt being cast on the credit of the United States. If a country needs to borrow in order to sustain, or to magnify, the deficit incurred by its fiscal practices, then it has to find someone who will lend it the money. Someone has to buy its bonds.

Now of course the next question to ask is: How much interest is being paid for those bonds? Very unstable governments can usually sell bonds, at least in the short term, if they promise a huge return. Not long ago Mexico was paying out 12 percent and more to anyone who would lend it money. The money poured in, but the malpractices outpaced the subventions, and devaluation came, so steep that bondholders ended up with 1 percent or less, and of course a reduction in the bond's face value.

The U.S. is paying about 6.5 percent on its Treasury bonds, which is a lot more than the traditional 3 percent interest, the conventional orthodox rate of return for a hundred years. But given two generations of inflation, the price is not inordinate.

Compared to what? The interest rate is subject to the discipline of capital mobility. Money flows to the market in which returns for its use are the largest. This means a general equality in interest rates, subject only to the stability of the lender. In the international markets, Russia would have to pay about two and a half times as much as the U.S.

Next, one looks to the size of the national debt over against national income. A national debt of $1 trillion would instantly bankrupt a majority of the nations on earth. But $1 trillion is a mere 11 percent of our national income. We have, now, a national debt of $5.7 trillion, which is equal to 63 percent of our national income.

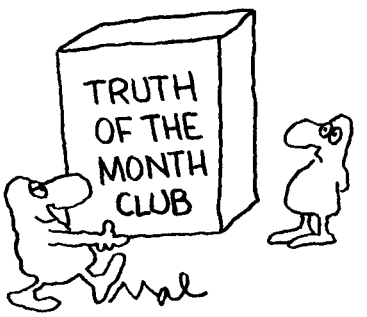
That is a heavy debt; but again, one looks for relative figures. In Canada, the debt is about 87 percent of national income; in Japan it is 105 percent.

The above would seem to be telling us that our national debt is not immobilizing the U.S. economy. There are, of course, many other proofs that we're doing okay economically. *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.* Those classic words were uttered when the question was asked: What were the achievements of the architect Christopher Wren? Well, he had endowed much of London with his genius. "If you seek his monument, look around you." The U.S. economy is flourishing.

But then there is the question of the burden of annual interest payments on the debt. These amount to approximately $200 billion.

Surveying the problem of debt reduction bit by bit: Suppose we were talking about a $100 billion surplus and confronted the alternatives of applying it to debt reduction, or returning the money to the taxpayer. Self-evidently, we are talking about the overtaxed taxpayer, since that is why we have a surplus. Tax rates aren't supposed to be motivated by a desire to generate a surplus.

If that $100 billion, at the hands of taxpayers, is going to generate tax revenues larger than the cost of borrowing money, then we are ahead of the game,



are we not? Does money returned to taxpayers tend to result in money deployment that generates tax revenue? The answer, quite simply, is yes, unless the whole of it is spent on ice-cream cones and aspirin, which are not taxed.

But then too, money returned to taxpayers is spent also on capital growth, which not only adds year after year to the revenue of government, but to the satisfaction of the community. Money spent to develop a housing project satisfies not only local tax collectors, but also people looking for a place to live.

It is a dangerous appeal, that of debt reduction. The reason being that it is axiomatic that human beings should not run into debt, and that those who are in debt should use the proceeds of unexpected revenue to reduce that debt. But people aren't governments, whose vices are distinctive, as also their opportunities.

Is the FBI Mad at You?

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 15

A nonpolitical story told last week of the FBI's no doubt unhappy release of one more file kept by the Bureau's late director, J. Edgar Hoover. The file discloses important things about Mr. Hoover and vital things about the United States.

The Freedom of Information Act amendments of 1974 require federal agencies to give up files that pertain to any American citizen who petitions to see them. There are common-sense exceptions: You can't write in to find out what somebody said about you when the FBI was conducting a security check.

What transpired last week were bureau memorandums on the activity of Murray Kempton (1917–1997). Kempton had briefly joined the Young Communist League in the 1930s and, after the war, wrote a provocative newspaper column. He was correctly acknowledged, by colleagues in the craft, as supreme; but that isn't what Mr. Hoover cared about. He cared about Kempton's general impiety and his sallies in the 1970s in defense of individual members of the Black Panther movement.

There are those who believe the FBI has no business keeping an eye on writers. This seems on the face of it absurd, the equivalent of presuming that writers

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can't engage in illegal activity. What is interesting in the Kempton file isn't that the FBI was keeping its eyes on him. It is that the material by Kempton, shown to Director Hoover, elicited comments from Hoover that reinforce what we now know about him, thanks mostly to author Natalie Robins and her book, *Alien Ink: The FBI's War on Freedom of Expression*.

Mr. Hoover could not stand unorthodox opinion, especially if it touched on the FBI. The material relating to Kempton reveals scribbles in the handwriting of the Director expressing himself on Kempton. On one column brought to his attention he wrote, "I am surprised that Scripps-Howard are taking on this rat." On another, "He is a real stinker."

I can contribute to the story line the following: While a student in college, I conducted a forum on the FBI and its activity, which so endeared me to Mr. Hoover that he offered me a job and subsequently posed for a photograph with my six-year-old son. In 1967, NATIONAL REVIEW published a parody, a facsimile of the *New York Times* featuring the kind of news liberal Americans would most relish seeing ("Regents Hand Over Campus to Students in California," "Federal Curb Demanded on Big Business," "Papal Encyclical Abandons 1870's Infallibility Rule"). One story reported that Director J. Edgar Hoover had been arrested on a morals charge.

We at NATIONAL REVIEW thought this hilarious and did not learn until the publication of Ms. Robins's book that the Director greeted the parody with thunderous denunciations, ordering the Bureau to boycott me.

It was so with Kempton. He learned of this in 1989 (17 years after Hoover's death) and wrote, "My career's vicissitudes have all been of my own doing, and my malice toward Hoover, which was always small, and his malice toward me, which seems to have been outsized, were alike inconsequential for help or harm."

It is fine that the animosity of the head of the FBI can be—undetectable. The people on whom Mr. Hoover breathed fire in his quarters were simply untroubled, so long as they abided by the law.

It can be argued that Kempton's singular charm was his protection from Mr. Nixon and his administration. There is a point here. Even Bishop Spong, the unorthodox Episcopalian who retired last month with many fireworks, might have forgiven Kempton's treatment of him. The sentence here quoted is from a letter from Kempton, revealing that on some subjects he was anything but unorthodox.

"My church was inspired by a languid but dutiful zeal to serve the royal will with a bill of divorce. *The Book of Common Prayer*—the envy even of you Romans who deserve to be envied for everything else—was established as the foundation of this shadowed faith; and every line and comma was passed through the gimlet eye of Elizabeth I. . . . A church founded on premises so entirely dubious has of course a special duty to proceed thereafter with the strictest logic toward its conclusion, which makes it curious to see so many bishops still debating the ordination of women and homosexuals without ever troubling their brother Spong in Newark, who expresses his doubt about the Resurrection on National Public Radio and then dispenses the wafers at Easter Communion and indulges the cardinal ecclesiastical sin of collecting your rations and quarters and then stiffing the hotelkeeper by declining to sing for your supper."

Imagine dubbing such a man a stinking rat!

Johnny Can't Speak

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 18

THE negatives on Mr. Bush have fastened with progressive intensification on his language problems. This is so for reasons both journalistic (it's fun to quote malapropisms) and human. It can be boring, after 90 days of following the candidates, to attempt to rivet attention on the differences in emphasis by McCain and Bush on campaign-finance reforms and tax cuts.

Richard Lowry of NATIONAL REVIEW writes, "At the end of his brief talk, Bush cites freedom as America's 'greatest export': 'freedoms of religions . . . speech . . . elections.' Only Bush would refer to 'freedom of religion' in the plural. But then, he often garbles and makes up words, as when he tells one South Carolina crowd that his education message 'will resignate amongst all parents.'"

The Economist slotted, as the incomprehensible remark of the week, "What I am against is quotas. I am against hard quotas, quotas they basically delineate based upon whatever. However, they delineate, quotas, I think, vulcanize society."

The *Daily Telegraph* of London does an extensive survey of the problem by Ben Fenton, entering into the subject for discussion a genetic question: Is this a Bush family problem? He recalls the elder Bush's, "We have had triumphs, we have made mistakes, we have had sex [setbacks]." And asks the darkest question: "The difference between the two men is that President Bush was never thought of as an unintelligent man, merely one who could not express his thoughts in a way that made much sense to the rest of the English-speaking world. His son is facing increasing questions about whether he has the basic qualities necessary in a President, including intellect."

Memory goes back to 1959. President Dwight Eisenhower is asked at a press conference what he thinks of the constitutional amendment (Twenty-Second) that forbids a third term:

"Well, first of all, I don't believe I ever spoke out against it. I said this, it was just from—since I have never made a deep study of this thing, because what was the use—from my viewpoint, I said I thought on balance it was an unwise amendment. However, there were so many people whose fears are very real that somebody who would get a hold of the kind of military force we now have, get a hold of it and use it as an instrument of establishment of centralized or dictatorship form of government, I would think that—I could argue pretty well on either side of this one."

It isn't safe, really, to deduce from order or disorder in speech, the resources of presidential candidates. Some were impatient with Ike as president, but no one doubted his capacity to command. And it is sobering to reflect that he served in the Philippines before the World War as a scrivener, writing among other things speech drafts for our military Cato, Douglas MacArthur.

Lowry writes, "Later, when he [Bush] mentions that he flew jets for the Texas National Guard, then went on to become commander in chief of the Guard, he snickers and remarks, 'Only in America'—as if his getting elected governor were a piece of American bizarro on a par with the Ginzu knife and Monica Lewinsky's contract with Jenny Craig."

George W.'s recent difficulties may have to do with his formulation problems, but they do not add up to disqualification to serve.

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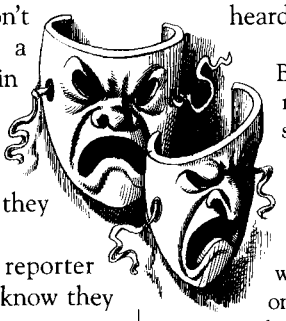
■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

JOHN MCCAIN got stuck in a verbal tar pit in his recent attempt to paint himself as a blasé man of the world. Ironically, it began on his campaign bus, the "Straight Talk Express," and continued in a store selling extra-sharp cheese.

Asked about gays in the military, he stated in his modestly boastful way that he had served with many in the Navy, though he had never discussed the subject with them. He probably thought this proved that "don't ask, don't tell" works, but there was a slight problem: McCain was in the Navy back when gays were barred from the military and faced instant dismissal if exposed. Naturally they never discussed it with him.



That being the case, the reporter shot back, how did McCain know they were gay?

It was a Biblical moment, recalling the world's first Gotcha! question: "Who told you that you were naked?" It's not hard to imagine the sensation that must have slammed through him. Since we're recalling notable moments in gardens, we can go with Emily Dickinson's "zero at the bone" on seeing a snake in hers.

McCain had three choices: He could say his gay shipmates told him they were gay, which would have contradicted his original statement; he could say he found them in flagrante and failed to report them; or he could say he "just knew."

With no choice but the last, he lumbered into a wordy answer about recognizing "by behavior and by attitudes," whereupon gay spokesmen issued their usual condemnation of stereotyping. Their reaction was fairly tepid as these things go, but McCain panicked and made another statement, explaining that he had merely had "suspicions" about certain shipmates, and that someone else had told him they were gay.

Two days later, he went before Katie Couric in the obligatory clarification rite, explaining that a fellow officer had indeed confessed his homosexuality to him, but only after leaving the Navy.

For some reason I have trouble visualizing this heart-to-heart. I think he made the whole thing up and never served with any gays, real or suspected, and furthermore I don't care.

What bothers me about this incident is what our fear of stereotyping is doing to the qualities of insight, perception, and subtlety of mind. The whole country is turning into Scarlett O'Hara. You heard me, Scarlett O'Hara:

> But Scarlett intended to marry—and marry Ashley—and she was willing to appear demure, pliable, and scatterbrained if those were the qualities that attracted men. Just why men should be this way, she did not know. She only knew that such methods worked. It never interested her enough to try to think out the reason for it, for she knew nothing of the inner workings of any human being's mind, not even her own. She knew only that if she did or said thus-and-so, men would unerringly respond with the complementary thus-and-so. It was like a mathematical formula and no more difficult, for mathematics was the one subject that had come easy to Scarlett in her schooldays.

Every American is expected to be a "people person," yet we dare not go from A to B in assessing them, on pain of death from our internal censor. Instead we must judge each person we meet "as an individual," a parlor version of reinventing the wheel that precludes drawing conclusions, playing hunches, or learning anything at all that might come in handy the next time we meet an individual.

Like John McCain, we pass insight around like a hot potato, and palm perception off on "someone else" so we will not be suspected of putting two and two together. Our goal is nothing less than willful obtuseness, a condition that was displayed in all its glory by a woman on *Hardball* who illustrated the pitfalls of gay stereotyping by drawing what passes these days for an analogy.

Suppose, she said, you entered a room and saw there a man in a kilt. You would assume he was a Scotsman, wouldn't you? But he could be "an extra from *Braveheart*, [or] it might be Halloween."

Our rejection of wide-ranging ruminative thinking is a key factor in many of our woes, such as the "crisis in relationships." Men who don't generalize about women will be even more dumbfounded than those who do, while women who generalize about men will be somewhat less furious than those who don't. Every little bit helps.

Public confessions of personal behavior are deemed offensive by many, but they may serve as R&R leave in our war *against stereotyping*. Someone who knows himself to be an incestuous foot-fetishist might well find it a strain to be judged "as an individual" and pursued by the blockheaded furies of equality. Going on Jerry Springer with the other incestuous foot-fetishists is a way of saying, "*Now* do you get it?"

Gays especially are made uncomfortable by unanalytical people and often confess to them for reasons unrelated to braggadocio. They may simply be tired of waiting for the truth to sink in, or they may find it necessary to clear things up when a determined tabula rasa mistakes them for extras from *Deliverance*. Gays prefer heterosexuals who are worldly, raffish, nonconformist, and eccentric, not out of snobbery or decadence but because these types never meet a thought they cannot entertain—royally.

The worst damage inflicted by our fear of stereotyping is in the arts. A creative artist "just knows" things. When this river flows unimpeded the result is a Shakespeare, but when it's dammed up we get the eighth wonder of the American global village, the nonjudgmental novelist.

They're a lot like politicians. Afraid to exclude, they throw in so many characters that they end up with the big tent of Republican dreams. Afraid to differentiate, they make everybody talk alike. Afraid to dominate, they refuse to plot. Afraid to instruct, they dumb down their language.

And afraid to think, they display the insight of Scarlett O'Hara. **NR**

Miss King can be reached at P. O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, Va. 22404.

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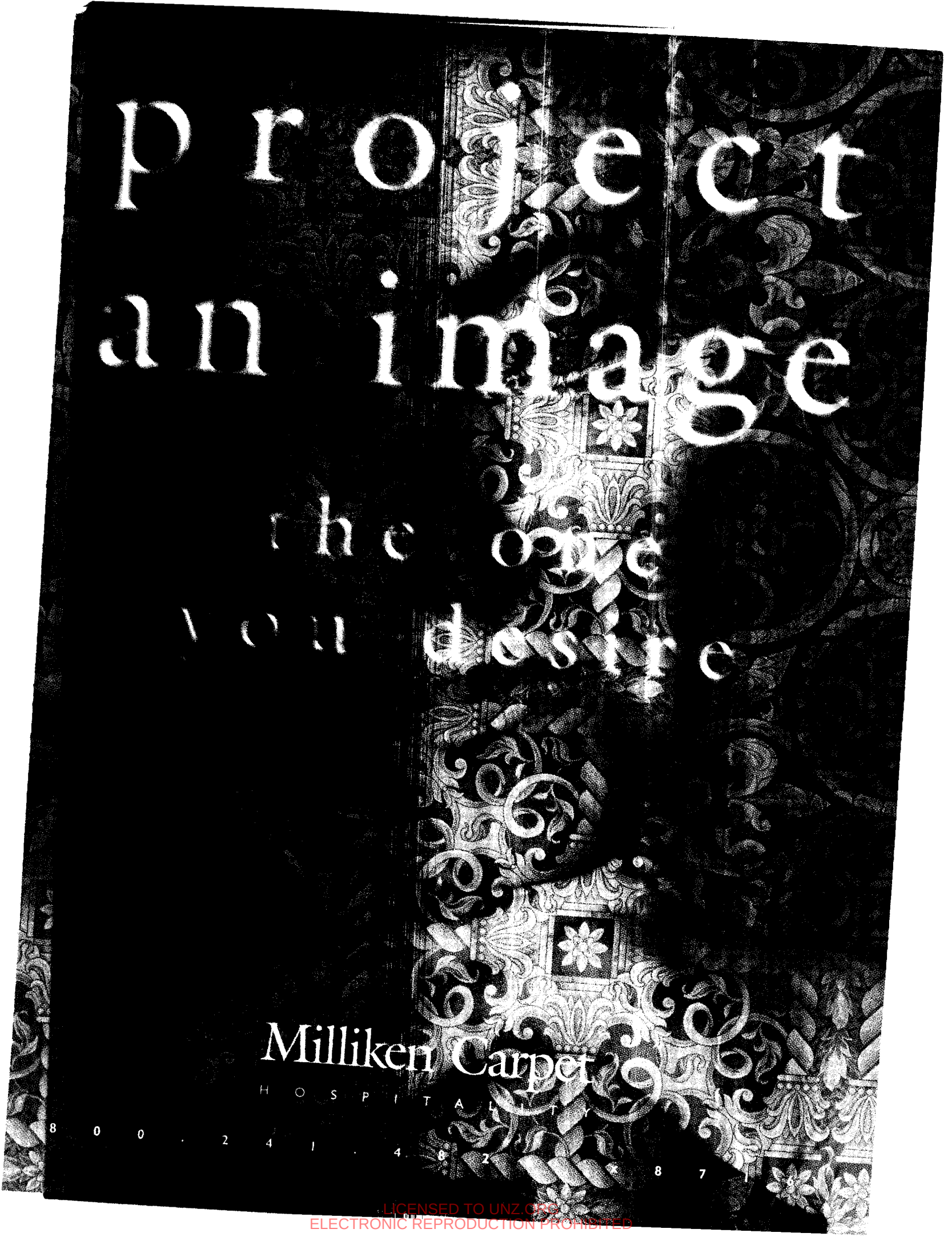

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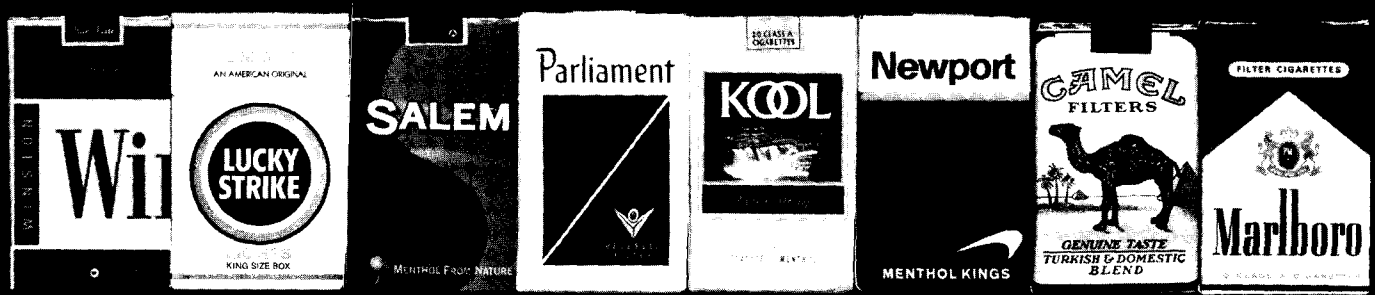

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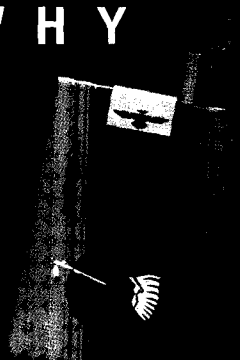

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